

THE INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL WORKERS' UNION OF AFRICA

by

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CAPE TOWN, 1973

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INTRODUCTION

The story of the I.C.U. is well-known and has been recounted several times. The earliest account - apart from fugitive pieces - appeared in 1940 in Testament of Friendship, the biography of Winifred Holtby by Vera Brittain, whose information was derived partly from Arthur Creech Jones, M.P. and, more particularly, W.G. Ballinger, who was appointed Adviser to the Union in 1928. Though of value for the light it throws upon the Adviser himself and the white sympathisers with the I.C.U., it is tendentious and not free from error. A much longer account appeared in Professor E. Roux's Time Longer than Rope, published in 1949, which most second-hand accounts of the I.C.U. have used - and abused.⁽¹⁾ While he disapproved of the policy the leaders followed and had little regard for the white liberals who patronised them, Roux was sympathetic towards the Union and had an unsentimental affection for Clements Kadalie and Allison Champion, the dominant figures. Drawing largely upon personal knowledge and upon newspapers (including some later issues of the I.C.U. paper, The Workers' Herald), he painted a lively and generally objective and accurate picture. The principal weakness of the Roux account is its perfunctory treatment of the early period of the I.C.U.'s history, the years before the opening of its offices in Johannesburg.

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1. E. Roux, p.153 (2nd ed.): "Full of restless energy, a born orator, a capable organiser, he was able to overcome the disadvantages of being unable to speak the South African Bantu languages." B.J. Liebenberg: The Union of South Africa up to the Statute of Westminster, 1910-1931 (in C.F.J. Muller, ed.: Five Hundred Years; a History of South Africa), p.359: "The founder and leader of the I.C.U. was Clements Kadalie, a native of Nyasaland, whose organising ability, drive and exceptional demagogic talent compensated for his inability to speak the South African native languages."

The most comprehensive history that has so far come out is by Dr. Sheridan W. Johns III, who has written two papers, one published as an article in Race ("The Birth of Non-white Trade Unionism in South Africa") in 1967, dealing with the foundation and early years of the I.C.U., and the second ("Trade Union, Political Pressure Group or Mass Movement?") included in a collection of papers edited by R.I. Rotberg and A.A. Mazrui in 1970, Protest and Power in Black Africa. The author of these two papers made use of, among other sources, a typescript copy of Kadalie's autobiography, the Library of Congress file of The Workers' Herald, the Creech Jones-Kadalie correspondence in the Winifred Holtby Collection at Kingston-upon-Hull and a number of important mimeographed documents in the possession of the Program of African Studies, Northwestern University. The second of the two papers is the fuller and better documented. Both are written from a neutral standpoint.

Between the publication of Dr. Johns's first article and the appearance of his second there were published the Kadalie autobiography, My Life and the I.C.U. (1970), and a new account of the I.C.U. in H.J. and R.E. Simons: Class and Colour in South Africa (1969). The latter, based upon a very wide range of printed sources, is polemic rather than history, but is a useful, if not altogether reliable, source of information. The former, while doing less than justice to Kadalie's intelligence and tending to omit whatever redounds little to his credit, presents a truthful - though partial and, in places, slightly garbled - story. It is a helpful, though not indispensable, source book.

The account presented here differs chiefly from its predecessors (to each of which a debt must be gratefully acknowledged) in being fuller and in making use of archival material hitherto untouched, viz. the Ballinger and Forman Collections. The Ballinger Collection, somewhat eccentrically divided between the Universities of Cape Town and the Witwatersrand, is made up of the papers of the Hon. W.G. Ballinger and such documents as were preserved by Mrs. Ethelreda Lewis and Miss Winifred Holtby (the main South African and English patrons of the I.C.U.) and handed over to him. It contains little relating to the period prior to Mrs. Lewis's association with the Union (1926). The Forman Collection (in the University of Cape Town) is composed of the papers of Mr. A.W.G. Champion, which were acquired by the late Lionel Forman, presumably for a history that he intended to write himself. Naturally the I.C.U. documents in that collection do not pre-date Mr. Champion's own connection with the Union, which began in 1925. The information derived from these two collections has been supplemented by a study of the extant copies of The Workers' Herald, first published in 1923. Apart from the Library of Congress file (which was available on microfilm) there are two other imperfect runs of the paper, one in the South African Library, Cape Town, and one (the former property of E. Roux) in the Cory Library, Grahamstown (which was made available on microfiche).

The earlier and more obscure period of the I.C.U.'s history required considerably more research. The material exploited comes chiefly from the South African state archives in Cape Town and Pretoria,⁽¹⁾ from the papers of the Cape Federation of Labour

1. The Central Archives at Pretoria may give further valuable information when material at present withheld from public inspection through the working of the fifty-year rule becomes accessible.

Unions (lodged at the University of the Witwatersrand) and from a painstaking (and tedious) perusal of the columns of the Cape Times. Other newspapers have been used more selectively to yield information about both the earlier and the later phases of the story. As no doubt in most research, serendipity has brought its welcome, if haphazard, rewards.

The present study has three aims. Firstly it endeavours to give a detailed, though not exhaustive, history of the I.C.U. in broadly chronological sequence, to show how it was organised and to record what its leaders were doing, saying and thinking at any given time. Quotations are introduced rather freely in the belief that they transmit thoughts and feelings more perfectly and more vividly and often more succinctly than do paraphrases. Some of the detail, which may at first sight seem trivial and otiose, has been included deliberately in an attempt to build up a pointillist picture that conveys more in its entirety than the sum of its parts. Secondly it tries to fit the I.C.U. into its historical setting and to show that it was neither rootless nor, in many of its aspects, unique. Thirdly it offers an oblique interpretation and comment that seeks to be neither importunate nor partisan.

In presenting this thesis I am sensible of certain lacunae, - which do not, however, I hope, disrupt the continuity of the story or distort its accuracy - and of some infelicity in balance and emphasis. Yet had I worked on it longer and delayed its completion, it would, I suspect, have merely been longer and only marginally better. "The thesis was an end," says Graham Greene of an indefatigable thesis-writer he met in the forests of Liberia, "but the collection of material for the thesis had no end. The thesis was evasive as the Castle of Kafka's religious parable."

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My first debt is to Professor H.M. Robertson, without whom this thesis would never have been begun and whose judicious comments have saved me from much obscurity and error. I am deeply indebted also to those survivors from the events recorded in these pages who, when interviewed, bore with patience my prolonged and persistent questioning. I refer to the Hon. W.G. Ballinger, who gave me every assistance in the search for material, Mr. J. Gomas, Mr. H. Selby Msimang and Mr. A.W.G. Champion. Among others who have helped me in a variety of ways and to whom I express my thanks I must especially mention Mr. J.R. Altman, Dr. J.E. Atkinson, Mr. Budd, Dr. E. Brookes, Mr. C.R. Diamond, Mrs. Forman, Miss D.M. Hartwell, Mr. J. Henry, Miss T. Hutchinson, Mrs. M. Kooy, Mrs. E.H. McCann, Mr. G. Quinn, Mrs. W. Roux, Dr. C.C. Saunders, Professor G.A. Shepperson, Mrs. P. Stevens, Mrs. A. Thom, Mrs. C. Thorne, Mr. D. Ticktin, Professor S.T. van der Horst and Mr. J. Wainer. I am grateful also to the South African Institute of Race Relations and to the staffs of the following libraries and archives:- Cape Archives (Cape Town), Central Archives (Pretoria), Cory Library (Grahamstown, Hiddingh Hall Library (University of Cape Town), Jagger Library (University of Cape Town), Johannesburg Public Library, Kingston-upon-Hull Central Library, Library of Congress Photoduplication Service, Natal Society Library (Pietermaritzburg), New York Public Library Photoduplication Service, South African Library (Cape Town), and the Library of the University of the Witwatersrand.

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NOTE ON REFERENCES

Second and subsequent references to printed sources and unpublished theses is by Op.cit. or Loc.cit (as appropriate) except when this is likely to lead to confusion. Where more than one book or article by a single author is referred to, a short title is given after the first reference (e.g. E. Roux: Time Longer than Rope; E. Roux: S.P. Bunting).

There is some slight inconsistency in the underlining of titles and the Kadalie autobiography is indiscriminately cited as My Life and the I.C.U. and My Life. Pressure of time - occasioned principally by an unanticipated bringing forward of the date of submission of theses - has proved resistant to the demands of symmetry.

CHAPTER I

The Foundation of the I.C.U. and the Cape Town Dock Strike, 1919-1920.

τὸ παρὸν γὰρ αἰεὶ βαρὺ τοῖς ὑπηκόοις

Thucydides I 77.5

"The first question that comes to mind is what earthly reason is there that there should be a different union for Natives and a different union for non-Natives?"

(A.W.G. Champion, October, 1943).

CHAPTER I

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"The first question that comes to mind is what earthly reason is there that there should be a different union for Natives and a different union for non-Natives?"

(A.W.G. Champion, October, 1943).

"The I.C.U. was born in this manner.

"One Saturday afternoon during the influenza epidemic of 1918. I was in the company of two Nyasaland friends in Cape Town. We were strolling in Darling Street when the Cape Argus, the afternoon daily newspaper, was out in the streets for sale. I bought a copy of the paper, and as soon as I perused it, I began to inform my friends that the end of the war was in sight, for Sir Douglas Haig had launched his offensive in Flanders. Suddenly appeared a European constable, who pushed me off the pavement, assaulting me at the same time. I informed my friends of my intention to report the matter at police headquarters. My two friends, who did not possess the meagre education and little courage I had at the time, refused to accompany me there. As I was arguing with my friends a European appeared on the scene. He must have been walking behind the policeman. After asking us a few questions, to which I replied without hesitation, he handed me his business card, informing me I could mention his name to the police, as he had witnessed the unprovoked assault on me. Alone I went to the police station to lay my complaint against the constable. It was unusual at the time for an African to report a European constable in South Africa, as I was told by the sergeant-in-charge. Instead of accepting my complaint, he hurled questions at me. Where had I come from? Where had I obtained my education? I was probably to him unlike the ordinary African usually seen in Cape Town. I pressed my complaint, however, brushing aside these irrelevant questions. Finally I was ordered to call again the following day, which was a Sunday.

"On the second call the sergeant-in-charge resumed cross-examining me in regard to where I had come from and obtained my education. At last he made an apology on behalf of the constable, stating he made the assault on me because of his mental weakness, arising from overwork with the epidemic cases which were raging in the city. Thereupon I retorted that if I were to assault European citizens and when caught give as my excuse for my action mental suffering on my part, would such an excuse be accepted? My logic apparently appealed to his conscience, for he raised again the question of my education and home. He eventually promised he would thoroughly investigate the matter.

"The following day I called on my European sympathiser in Long Street, where he was carrying on a cutlery business. His name was A.F. Batty. When he stood for a parliamentary by-election for the Harbour constituency, he invited me to join his election committee. We fought the election, but Batty was defeated by a small majority. After the election Batty called me to his shop where we discussed the advisability of forming a trade union. He informed me that he was satisfied I could be useful to my people if I could embark on trade union activities instead of politics. I readily agreed to his suggestion, although I anticipated difficulty in getting people together. We planned to invade the Cape Town docks, as the Harbour constituency fell in that area.

"Our first meeting was staged in Excelsior Hall, Buitengracht Street, on January 17, 1919. The majority at the meeting were Coloured men engaged at the docks. There were about half a dozen Africans, including myself. Batty, who was a good platform speaker, presided. In his address he stressed the necessity for the non-Europeans to help themselves instead of depending on politicians like himself. He strongly advised the formation of a trade union, although one should not forget the fact that he wanted to solidify the non-European vote in the Harbour constituency for the next election. By a unanimous resolution the meeting decided to form a union with the name 'Industrial and Commercial Union'. On a motion by Batty I was unanimously elected secretary. Twenty-four members were enrolled that first night; they each paid a shilling entrance fee, making twenty-four shillings in all, with which the first banking account of the I.C.U. was opened. At this first meeting it was resolved that weekly meetings of the new union should be held."

So runs the account of the birth of the I.C.U. given in his autobiography by its best-known leader, Clements Kadalie.⁽¹⁾ It differs in some particulars from the more modest story told to the I.C.U. Conference at Durban in 1927.

"Mr. Clements Kadalie (National Secretary) said he wished to introduce a gentleman, who was present in the house, who could rightly claim to be father of the I.C.U. Some nine years ago he (Kadalie) had occasion to walk down Hanover Street, Capetown. He was in company with two friends, and when they came to Darling Street they met a constable who said something to his two friends. He interfered, and that was a crime, so the constable pushed him down from the pavement. We decided then to report him, but while we were discussing this matter a European gentleman came along and asked who was assaulted, and we told him it was Clements Kadalie. The gentleman then said that that was the reason why there was no friendship between white and black in this country. He handed me his card, said Mr. Kadalie, and we took the number of the policeman and reported him to his sergeant. That was the beginning of the I.C.U. and the European gentleman was none other than Mr. A.F. Batty, whom you see here on the platform. After acquaintance with Mr. Batty we decided to start a non-European trade union,

1. C. Kadalie: My Life and the I.C.U.; the Autobiography of a Black Trade Unionist in South Africa (London), 1970), p.39-40.

and the first meeting was held on 7th January, 1919, with Mr. Batty in the chair. After outlining our object to the meeting, I gave what may be considered my "maiden speech" in this great movement. At this meeting Mr. Batty made it plain that he wished this to be a purely non-European trade union, and he would only identify himself with it in as far as he could give them advice. That night twenty-four members joined and we collected £1.4s., which was next day deposited in the Standard Bank.

"The second meeting was held on the 25th of January, and I was then appointed first secretary of the I.C.U., on the motion of Mr. Batty. Mr. J. Paulsen, (2) who was foreman at the Union-Castle docks, was appointed chairman. From that time Mr. Batty never interfered with the internal affairs of the I.C.U. It was only a few months ago that he came to see us in Johannesburg, and he was surprised to see the progress we had made.

"I have now the pleasure of introducing Mr. A.F. Batty, one of the few men in South Africa really interested in the welfare of the Natives.

"Mr. A.F. Batty (Pretoria) said he was proud to be called the 'father' of the I.C.U. He knew that there was no love lost between the Dutch and Native races of this country, but we have to thank that Dutch constable for his action was really the beginning of the I.C.U...."(2)

A third version, very different indeed, is recounted by W.G. Ballinger, who went to South Africa in 1928 to act as Adviser to the I.C.U.

"A somewhat more prosaic account of the formation of the I.C.U. has been given to me by a prominent Cape Town official of the Cape Federation of Labour and member of the A.E.U. who has been in close touch with the Trades and Labour movement in South Africa for over 30 years. His version is that there was a somewhat feeble organisation of European workers known as the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union formed in Cape Town about 1917.

1. Kadalie's memory was at fault. His name was Paulse.
2. The Workers' Herald 17th May, 1927. It will be noticed that the 1927 version speaks of two initial meetings, not one, the first on the 7th January (not the 17th, which, however, appears to be the correct date).

A small group of radicals thought that the organisation would gain strength and bargaining power, if not prestige, if Natives and 'Coloureds' were allowed to join the organisation. Their proposal slipped through. When the European membership realised that they were outnumbered by non-Europeans they resigned almost en bloc. Most of the officials took fright and deserted. For a time the organisation remained as a body with a rank and file, but no leaders. It was resurrected by five Europeans who engineered Kadalie into the Secretaryship because he had been fairly well educated ..." (1)

There is, as it happens, incontestable evidence that the I.C.U. was founded in January, 1919,⁽²⁾ and Kadalie's circumstantial account of the encounter with Batty and of the first meeting or so of the new union has a ring of truth that slight differences between his 1927 version and the later one in no way dispel. Nevertheless, the Ballinger version, even though derived from hearsay long after the event, does contain a core of fact. The story must have originated in the formation, in the middle of 1918, largely through the efforts of A.F. Batty, of a general, multi-racial union at Simonstown, some twenty miles south of Cape Town,⁽³⁾ a union which, in its early months, was also called the Industrial (and) Commercial Union.⁽⁴⁾ Whether or not it was intended to bring commercial workers into this, it is impossible to say, but it very soon became the

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1. W.G. Ballinger: Winifred Holtby and Africa (Undated MS, B/UCT). It was upon this document that Vera Brittain partially relied for Chapter XV of her biography of Winifred Holtby, who played a part in the later history of the I.C.U. (V. Brittain: Testament of Friendship, London, 1940).
 2. Cape Times 21st January, 1920.
 3. Minutes of the Cape Federation of Labour Unions (T.U.C.S.A. Papers) 10th June, 1918; Cape Times 14th August, 1920.
 4. Minutes of the Cape Federation 16th September, 1918.

union of the semi-skilled and unskilled workers employed in the Admiralty dockyard, and its name came to be simply the Industrial Workers' Union.⁽¹⁾

At least two other prominent white trade unionists - Englishmen like Batty - were associated with him in the formation of the I.C.U., F. Rayner, who also helped to found the Simonstown I.W.U., and J.H. Dean. As Kadalie said in 1927, Batty withdrew into the background and Rayner, too, pursued

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1. Unskilled and semi-skilled Coloured workers almost certainly predominated. (Secretary, Cape Federation to Rear-Admiral Hill 12th May, 1919, T.U.C.S.A. Papers). Skilled workers belonged to such craft unions as the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. In February, 1919, another general union, among the employees of the Cape Explosive Works, was founded at Somerset West, forty-eight kilometres south-east of Cape Town, by Robert Stuart, the Secretary of the Cape Federation (Minutes 27th February, 1919) and subsequently adopted the same constitution and name as the Simonstown I.W.U. The Simonstown and Somerset West branches of the I.W.U. were affiliated to the Federation at the end of 1919. (Minutes 4th December, 1919). In late 1920 the Somerset West branch split into two, Somerset West and Somerset Strand. (Minutes 11th November, 1920). Early in 1920 a union started among the workers at Ohlsson's brewery in Newlands, a suburb of Cape Town, and was affiliated to the I.W.U. (R. Stuart to W. Whitten 16th March, 1920).

other interests,⁽¹⁾ but Dean (described in December, 1919, as the "Hon. Organiser" of the I.C.U.⁽²⁾) was intimately concerned with the I.C.U. throughout the whole of 1919 and later.

1. It is clear that both men maintained their links with the I.C.U. "Votes of thanks to Messrs. A.F. Batty, J.H. Dean and F. Rayner for their assistance in consolidating the Union brought the proceedings to a close." (Annual meeting of the I.C.U., 16th January, 1920 - Cape Times 21st January, 1920). Albert Francis Batty had many other interests - Hon. Organiser of the Democratic Labour Party, representative of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers on the Cape Federation (Minutes 31st December, 1918), Secretary of the South African Industrial Federation's Co-operative Stores in Cape Town (where he got Kadalie a job for a time in 1919 - C. Kadalie: My Life, p.37) and in November, 1919, appointed to the Government's Cost of Living Commission (Cape Times 5th November, 1919, and 7th December, 1920). He was the representative of the Federation on various official committees - the Recruiting Committee, the Governor-General's Fund, and Returned Soldiers' Committee. (Cape Times 11th December, 1918; Minutes 21st January, 10th April and 31st December, 1918, and 19th June and 4th September, 1919; R. Stuart to A.F. Batty 5th September, 1919, T.U.C.S.A. Papers). Rayner represented the Bioscope Operators on the Cape Federation (Minutes 31st December, 1918) and played a leading part in the foundation and running of the Tenants' Protection League (Cape Times 14th August and 11th September, 1920).
2. Cape Times 23rd December, 1919. Dean represented the Operative Bakers' Union on the Cape Federation. (Minutes 31st December, 1918). He was a trustee of the Federation and its representative for a time on the Returned Soldiers' Committee. (Minutes 31st January and 8th May, 1919). He was instrumental in the formation of a barmen's union in March, 1919 (Cape Times 31st March, 1919) and the Tramway Union in 1918 (Minutes: undated "Dispute Report"; Cape Times 22nd July, 1919) and seems to have had something to do with the Cabinet Workers (Minutes 4th July, 1918).

Although started through the efforts of the same men at much the same time, the I.C.U. and the I.W.U. soon followed divergent paths. While the I.W.U. was taken under the wing of the Cape Federation of Labour Unions,⁽¹⁾ the I.C.U. was never affiliated to it.⁽²⁾ The different relationship established between the I.C.U. and the Cape Federation may have developed because the I.C.U., being the product of the first attempt to establish a labour union in a field of employment where Africans were numerous, represented such a new and radical departure from existing trade union practice in Cape Town that it was difficult for the Federation to accommodate itself to it.⁽³⁾ Another, and more likely, explanation is that the I.C.U. was too closely associated with Batty's political ambitions. After having been an unsuccessful candidate on behalf of the South African Labour Party in the general election of October, 1915, Batty, together with Dean, Rayner and other friends, had broken away from the Labour Party to form the Democratic Labour Party, a splinter group confined to Cape Town, and, in competition with an official Labour candidate, stood for the new party in the by-election of December, 1918, mentioned by

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1. As early as September, 1918, the Secretary of the Cape Federation was busy trying to secure higher wages for the Simonstown dockyard members of the Union. (Minutes 16th September, 1918).
 2. Even the foundation of the I.C.U. was not recorded in its minutes.
 3. The I.W.U. itself met opposition from the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, Batty's own union, which tried to exclude it from the local trade union central committee in Simonstown. (Minutes 11th December, 1919).

Kadalie. The origin of the schism lay in the unwillingness of Batty and other Cape Socialists to tolerate the Labour Party's reluctance to give a genuine welcome to Coloured people in the labour movement, both political and industrial, and in their desire to extend the franchise arrangements of the Cape, which gave the vote to certain classes of Africans, as well as to people of mixed blood, to the other provinces of the Union of South Africa.⁽¹⁾

The Democratic Labour Party was remote from that other splinter from the Labour Party, the International Socialist League of Johannesburg, a precursor of the Communist Party of South Africa, though its enemies attempted to link the two.⁽²⁾ The D.L.P. differed from the parent party solely

1. The Democratic Labour Party, said one of its leaders (W. Freestone), "had no intention of going back to the South African Labour Party, while that party had class legislation inside its constitution and socialistic doctrine at its head." (Cape Times 11th December, 1918). The aims and methods of the D.L.P. included the following:- "South Africa an Integral Part of the British Commonwealth ... Electoral Reform including the Extension of the Cape Franchise throughout the Union ... Native Advancement ... Minimum Living Wage ... Arbitration and Conciliation Boards, Old Age Pensions, State Insurance against Accidents, Sickness and Unemployment ... To be obtained by Constitutional Propaganda ... By advocating that National, Provincial and Municipal Finance be obtained by Direct Taxation ... Encouragement of Voluntary Co-operative Farms, Industries and Distributing Stores ... Collective ownership where necessary of Lands, Mines and Vital Industries ... State ownership of Banks, Railways, Docks, Ships and other Monopolies." (The Cape Argus 8th January, 1919).
2. Cape Times 16th December, 1918. This must be one of the very earliest examples of the well-established practice of associating opponents, whatever their professed views, with the Communist Party.

on the colour question (accepting, for example, its support of the war effort). Batty, in his election campaign of December, 1918, specifically rejected revolution as a solution to South Africa's problems, and he seemed indeed to regard communism as an unpleasant and drastic purgative for the degenerate foreigner.

"Bolshevism ... may have been necessary in Russia to overthrow the ruling classes there. They had not sufficient information to know whether it was necessary there, but it might have been necessary in Germany to break down autocracy, and he considered it would be very good for some of the Germans if they had a little Bolshevism. They had made our people suffer, and a little punishment in return he would be glad to see. He considered that to talk of Bolshevism under the British flag was only the talk of lunatics and fools. There was no Bolshevism in England for the workers were too well organised, and had sufficient freedom through the constitution to express the will of the people. In South Africa they had a different problem. They had millions of uncivilised people who had never realised the value of the vote or ever had it to exercise, and any attempt to bring about such a thing as revolution in this country was courting disaster to civilisation." (1)

Clements Kadalie seems to imply in his autobiography that Batty was something of an opportunist, a view not unnaturally shared by his former Labour Party colleagues, who styled him "a political chameleon. He had wooed every party, and found a home nowhere, and as far as his Labour prestige was concerned, he represented a party of one, viz.

1. Cape Times 11th December, 1918.

Batty."⁽¹⁾ Yet he seemed popular enough among the Coloured voters.⁽²⁾ If a Unionist (Major G. Brand van Zyl) gained the seat in the 1918 by-election, Batty got the bigger share of the labour vote, and, since the dominant election issue was the colour bar, it is to be supposed that he gained the Coloured working class vote, while the S.A.L.P. candidate (C. Pearce) attracted the support of the corresponding white group.⁽³⁾ But what separated Batty from other white socialists was less his preoccupation with the Coloured vote (which all parties courted) than the intention he expressed weeks before the by-election of bringing Africans into the labour movement, a euphemism, in the eyes of his opponents for "letting loose ... thousands of savages in the industrial world".⁽⁴⁾ He was accused of wooing the "blanket vote",⁽⁵⁾

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1. Cape Times 14th December, 1918. There was some criticism in labour circles of Batty's accepting the Government's invitation to attend the National Conference of employers and employees in Pretoria in October, 1919 (Minutes 4th December, 1919) and agreeing to serve on the Cost of Living Commission after Thomas Boyde had refused to act as the representative of organised labour. This was thought to be "scabbing" on Boyde. (Minutes 13th November, 1919). Cf. also: "Batty is a man who, without being bad or violent, manages to drift about Africa making a small living ... and is, I fear, not too conscientious." (Mrs. E. Lewis to H. Pim 5th July, 1929, B/UCT).
 2. "Mr. Batty ... on his arrival in the hall was greeted with cheers." (Cape Times 19th December, 1918).
 3. The result - van Zyl 1071, Batty 607, Pearce 212. (Cape Times 21st December, 1918). It was scarcely a defeat "by a small majority", as Kadavie says. It is of some interest that, when the D.L.P. was formed, van Zyl (later Governor-General of the Union of South Africa) was asked to join it. (Cape Times 20th December, 1918).
 4. Cape Times 14th December, 1918. Even Dr. Abdurahman, a leader of the Coloured community, was conscious of his own audacity when, in December, 1918, he had spoken out in favour of trade unions for Africans. "They had got to organise the natives of South Africa as well, and he said so, whether he would be called a traitor to South Africa or not." A.F. Batty was on the platform at the time. (Cape Times 28th December, 1918).
 5. Cape Times 19th December, 1918.

that is the African voters, such few as there were, though these, of course, were far from being "blanket Kafirs", or migrant labourers from the country.⁽¹⁾

Few are the references to the I.C.U. to be found in the Cape Town newspapers and elsewhere during the first months of its existence, fewer still the references to Clements Kadalie. He was young and inexperienced, an alien who had been in South Africa less than a year when he was chosen to be the I.C.U.'s first Secretary, "engineered" perhaps into the position simply because he was an African of some education.

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1. After the election an attempt was made to avoid intra-labour contests for the future. A meeting of representatives from the S.A.L.P., the D.L.P. and the National Union of Railway and Harbour Servants, held at the end of December, 1918, called for the appointment of an Advisory Council that would try in the short run to prevent electoral conflicts and in the long run to resolve differences amongst the various branches of the labour movement. It was suggested that the Cape Federation should take the initiative in the establishment of such a Council and also call a trade union conference to discuss both industrial and political issues. The idea of an Advisory Council was dropped by the Cape Federation, but one result was its first conference of April, 1919. (Minutes 31st December, 1918). At the provincial elections of 1920 Rayner, as a D.L.P. candidate, again split the labour vote and came bottom in a three-cornered contest. (Cape Times 11th and 16th September, 1920). When Batty stood for the Harbour division in the general elections of 1920 and 1921, the absence of an S.A.L.P. candidate was probably an admission of defeat by the main party rather than the result of agreement. Batty was beaten on both occasions, though in the election of March, 1920, when there was a general swing to the left, he reduced van Zyl's majority to 154 (Cape Times 12th March, 1920), but in February, 1921, van Zyl (now South African Party) had a majority of 1035. (The Eastern Province Herald 10th February, 1921).

His home was in Nyasaland, in the vicinity of Bandawe, a United Free Church of Scotland mission station, and he was born in or before 1896,⁽¹⁾ the second son of Musa and the grandson of the paramount chief of the Atonga tribe.⁽²⁾ Musa intended his two elder sons, Robert and Clements, for the ministry,⁽³⁾ but died too soon, in 1904, to carry his intention out, and Clements's education became the responsibility of his mother and two of his uncles, both teachers. At the end of 1907 he entered Livingstonia College as a boarder to begin his secondary education and teacher training, which he completed in 1912.⁽⁴⁾ Although the level of education he attained was not high and his early letters - such few as survive - display an imperfect grasp of English and no little pomposity, certainly his later letters and speeches shed their Africanisms and became far more fluent

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1. "The exact date of my birth is not known, but it was recorded in the mission register that I was christened on Easter Day, 1896." (C. Kadalie: My Life, p.31). The dates given by Kadalie for the beginning of his secondary education and the completion of his teacher training suggest an earlier date, perhaps two or three years before 1896. This is supported by the evidence of the Principal Immigration Officer, Cape Town, who, in November, 1920, put his age at twenty-eight (Union of South Africa: Debates of the House of Assembly, 20th July, 1925, Col. 6291), a piece of information that apparently emanated from Robert Kadalie. (C. Kadalie: Op.cit., p.45-46).
 2. For a labour leader and socialist he was oddly proud of his blood relationship with the chief. (The Cape Mercury 11th January, 1928; C. Kadalie: Op.cit., p.31, 33).
 3. The Cape Mercury 11th January, 1928.
 4. According to his autobiography (p.32) in his final examinations he "topped the list with first-class honours". In an earlier account, which presumably also originated with Kadalie, he was more modest and gained only second-class honours. (The Cape Mercury 11th January, 1928).

and vigorous than would be supposed from the wooden and irritatingly self-congratulatory style affected in his autobiography. As a product of Scottish missionary education, he was free with biblical allusions, but in his public utterances he was opportunistic and inconsistent in his references to Christianity. "Mr. Kadalie", said A.W.G. Champion, his later colleague, "is not a Christian believer, but he is well read in scripture."⁽¹⁾ This scepticism, which lasted until late in life, was publicly declared in 1928:

"Personally I do not subscribe to any religious doctrine in the generally accepted sense of the term. In the words of Ingersoll, 'The world is my country, to do good is my religion,' and it seems to me that my life can be more usefully employed in endeavouring to improve the lot of my fellow-creatures here than in bothering about a chimerical life above." ⁽²⁾

At the beginning of 1913 the young Kadalie began his brief teaching career, which lasted until early in 1915, when he left home "in quest of a higher civilised

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1. A.W.G. Champion: Mr. Clements Kadalie's experiences (c. 1928). (Among Mr. Champion's MSS in the Forman Collection, University of Cape Town, MSS/26).
 2. C. Kadalie: The aims and motives of the I.C.U. (In The Realignment of Native Life on a Christian Basis, being the Report of the Proceedings of the Seventh General Missionary Conference of South Africa, Lovedale, 1928), p. 128. It is interesting to notice that in 1927 he took great pains to obtain a certificate of Church standing so that a child of his could be baptised. (Rev. R. Whyte to Mrs. E. Lewis, 1st April, 1927, B/Wits.).

life", sought first of all in Mocambique.⁽¹⁾ Like so many mission-trained expatriates of the Nyasa diaspora he was consumed with ambition and, filled as he was with a generous measure of self-confidence, was never reticent about his talents and achievements. The saga of his employment, even in the teaching profession, seems to have been tempestuous, punctuated with quarrels and frequent victimisation springing from malice and jealousy. From the time he left home until he became the paid secretary of the I.C.U. at the beginning of 1920,⁽²⁾ he went through a dozen jobs, mostly as a clerk - in Portuguese East Africa (where he stayed only a month), at various places in Southern Rhodesia (where he lived from 1915 to 1918), and at Cape Town⁽³⁾ - and had his longest period of unbroken service at a gold mine at Shamva, where he stayed a year. In Southern Rhodesia he tried to enlist in the King's African Rifles and applied for repatriation to a Native Commissioner, who told him to join instead the Rhodesian Native Regiment, a pioneer regiment, which was "poorly equipped and did not even wear boots."⁽⁴⁾ This

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1. C. Kadalie: My Life, p.33. Curiously he says he "taught in schools for one year in Nyasaland", but gives the starting date as January, 1913, and the date of his departure as early 1915. He left home before the Chilembwe rising, to which only a single reference has survived. "Yes, I (have) heard (about) that African patriot John Chilembwe and I am indeed proud of his name ..." (G.S. Mwase: Strike a Blow and Die; a Narrative of Race Relations in Colonial Africa, Cambridge, Mass., 1967, p.5. The editor, R.I. Rotberg, does not point out that the original letter is not extant and that the quotation is from a police report).
 2. C. Kadalie: My Life, p.44.
 3. Ibid, Chapter 1, passim.
 4. The Cape Mercury 11th January, 1928.

was as near as he got to joining the army, which, however, did not prevent him from claiming in a speech in May, 1928, to have been, during the war, a "law-abiding citizen who in 1914, when the Nationalists were in rebellion, was overseas fighting for the Empire." (1)

Kadalie left Southern Rhodesia in February, 1918, going straight to Cape Town, apart from breaking his journey for a short stay with a cousin in Kimberley. In Cape Town he was reunited to his brother Robert.

"When we reached his house at the top of Waterkant Street, my brother's wife, a Coloured woman, said to him after she had shaken hands with me, 'Look here, Robert, there is something in this boy and you will see.' Quietly I pondered over her remarks." (2).

In January of the following year the Nyasa immigrant became the unpaid Secretary of the newly-formed I.C.U. It was only one of a number of bodies competing for black support in post-war Cape Town, where churches (conventional and Ethiopian), political groups, quasi-political labour organisations and even genuine trade unions jostled one another. If Kadalie rose to the top, it was because he had exceptional talent. For he was, to quote two men who

1. Rand Daily Mail 7th May, 1928.

2. C. Kadalie: My Life, p.36. There seems to be a faint echo of St. Luke II, 51, " ... his mother kept in her heart the memory of all this."

knew him and came to be severely critical, "a capable organiser"⁽¹⁾ and "quite a useful negotiator",⁽²⁾ but undoubtedly his outstanding talent was his ability to fire the crowds that came to listen to his speeches. These were very lengthy, very rapidly delivered, very vivid, often amusing, usually abusive and always in English.⁽³⁾ None of the vernacular languages of South Africa was familiar to him, no disadvantage at Cape Town, where he addressed crowds composed of not only Africans of a variety of tribes, but also Coloured people. Kadalie was distinguished from his rivals for popular support by his capacity to command the loyalty of both non-European racial groups. It was not merely a question of his oratory: in his personal relationships also, his charm, when he chose to display it - he was equally capable of petulance and ill-temper - was compelling. Vain, unheroic, extravagant and bon vivant, he was yet generous, frank, even naïve, and

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1. E. Roux: Time Longer than Rope; a History of the Black Man's Struggle for Freedom, 2nd ed. (Madison, Wisconsin, 1964), p.153. Roux thought him a poet manqué. (E. and W. Roux: Rebel Pity; the Life of Eddie Roux, London, 1970, p.40).
 2. W.G. Ballinger: Undated, untitled memoir (B/Wits.).
 3. "To watch him address an open-air meeting and, as he neared the climax of his impassioned speech, pluck off his coat, then his waistcoat, and finally his collar and tie, in a kind of dramatic symbolism, was to realise the power he wielded over his Native audiences." (John Burger, pseudonym of Leo Marquard: The Black Man's Burden, London, 1943, p.204). "Whenever the occasion was big I used to take off my coat in order to enable me to move freely on the platform while pressing important pronouncements home. Indeed, sometimes I used to knock out my interpreters when 'heated' during some of my big orations." (C. Kadalie: My Life, p.201).

without malice or greed. He was certainly no intellectual. The only book for which there is irrefutable evidence that he read and was impressed by was a novel by Heaton Nicholls, Bayete, and this he recommended in 1927 to his colleagues,⁽¹⁾ presumably because he identified himself with its hero.⁽²⁾ Yet, however meagre his intellectual contribution to the South African labour movement, his powers of leadership, the strength and attraction of his personality are beyond doubt, though these are not conveyed by the posed photographs that survive of him, in which, round faced and astonishingly youthful in appearance, he displays few signs of his personal magnetism.⁽³⁾ Eagerness, quick intelligence, panache are more apparent than the capacity to sway, direct and administer that was clearly his. This, then, was the young Kadalie, an immigrant who had never in his life done manual work, had never worked in a factory, whose background

1. The Workers' Herald 17th May, 1927.

2. G. Heaton Nicholls: Bayete!; "Hail to the King!" (London, 1923). Though published in 1923, it was written before the 1914-18 War. The hero, John Nelson, alias Balumbata, the fictional successor to Lobengula, after being educated in America, where he narrowly escapes lynching, goes to South Africa as the inspired head of an Ethiopian Church. By means of a general strike he forces the Government into widening the franchise and he becomes a cabinet minister. The book ends with Nelson's death in an attempt to prevent an uprising which he has himself plotted and the death, at the hands of his wife, of the white woman (the Prime Minister's wife) with whom he is in love.

3. Chief Dhlamini (at the Kimberley Conference of the I.C.U. in December, 1927) said "he was very anxious to see what kind of a man Kadalie was; whether he was a big fat man with a big head and red eyes, or whether he was just an ordinary man. He found now that Kadalie was just an ordinary young African with a cheery disposition." (The Workers' Herald 18th January, 1928). It is generally agreed that he was tall and slim, but this is not borne out by the group photographs in which he appears.

was bourgeois, not proletarian, rural, not urban, professional or semi-professional, not industrial. For all his talents his name would never have become widely known had not a peculiar concatenation of events and influences opened a way for their exercise. The economic and social situation of the post-war period in South Africa, and more particularly in Cape Town, presented him with his opportunity.

South Africa had a labour situation that made it unique among industrialising countries, though perhaps some parallels might be drawn with other parts of Africa where there was substantial white settlement. It was not merely that South Africa was so different from the racially homogeneous European countries; it was also markedly different from other heterogeneous societies of comparable racial composition, such as the United States and Brazil. Whereas in South Africa the labour movement tended to be divided on racial lines, so that it is admissible to speak of "non-white trade unionism",⁽¹⁾ in the United States and Brazil, with rare and unimportant

1. As does S.W. Johns III in his article, The birth of non-white trade unionism in South Africa (Race, October, 1967).

exceptions,⁽¹⁾ black protest did not take an industrial form, and equally proletarian protest did not normally take a racial form. In Brazil the proletarianisation of the negro was a late development and so, indeed, was a labour movement of any sort, but while racial prejudice and discriminatory practices abounded, the trade union movement that finally emerged was not racially exclusive.⁽²⁾ In the United States also negroes, in attempting to acquire skills, found themselves obstructed by discrimination and met barriers erected by craft unions that were difficult to breach, and, in the South, such labour unions as they were permitted to join, namely in those occupations where they were too numerous to be ignored or excluded, were, until comparatively recently, organised with separate

1. The Frente Negra Brasileira, which appeared during the 1929-1933 Depression, might be considered an exception. However, it was not a labour movement so much as "a first manifestation of what was later called 'negritude' and, paradoxically, of a determination to find a place in the established order through economic advance." (R. Bastide: The development of race relations in Brazil, in G. Hunter, ed.: Industrialisation and Race Relations, a Symposium, London, 1965, p.20-21). The South African equivalents were the African Political (later People's) Organisation for Coloured people and the African National Congress for Africans, pressure groups whose interests extended to economic objectives. The Manifesto of the Brazilian Black Front began, "Let us unite, Countrymen. Let us unite, negro Associations, as a social force, as a moral force, as an economic force, as a Political force ...". (F. Fernandes: The Negro in Brazilian Society, New York, 1969, p.200-201). In the United States shortly after the Civil War there was an ephemeral National Colored Labor Union, whose failure to affiliate to the white National Labor Union can be attributed less to racial prejudice than to a difference of opinion over support for the Republican Party. (J.G. Rayback: A History of American Labor, New York, 1964, p.123).

2. R. Bastide: Loc.cit., p.14, 25.

branches.⁽¹⁾ Yet, even in the skilled trades, the American Federation of Labour, while its practice frequently fell short of its ideal, always opposed the unequal treatment of workers on the ground of race,⁽²⁾ and in the unions of the unskilled the same principle of non-discrimination was accepted and, moreover, implemented with greater consistency.⁽³⁾ In America industrialisation came first to the North, where unskilled work was not confined to any particular racial group and where negroes, being far less numerous than in the South, were thought to be less of a threat to the interests of organised labour inside its ranks than outside undermining its bargaining power. Since unions, to be effective, had to be national and, therefore, to embrace labour in the southern states, when those came to be industrialised, the practices of the North gradually spread to the South.⁽⁴⁾ Even though it was difficult for the negro to escape from the lower levels of the proletariat, to be unskilled and to be black were not synonymous in the United States.

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1. R. Marshall: Industrialisation and race relations in the southern United States (In G. Hunter, ed.: Op.cit.), p.66-67, 72.
 2. P. Taft: Organised Labor in American History (New York, 1964), p.665 ff.
 3. Ibid, p.676; 677; R. Marshall: Loc.cit., p.72, 80.
 4. H. Blumer: Industrialisation and race relations (In G. Hunter, ed: Op.cit.), p.247.

In South Africa to be unskilled and to be black approximated closely,⁽¹⁾ although practice varied throughout the country. The most striking exception to the general rule that race and skill were linked was to be found in the older settled parts of the Cape of Good Hope, in particular the Cape Peninsula, but also the Eastern Province of the Cape. Here were concentrated those of mixed blood, the Coloured people, who provided, until well into the nineteenth century, most of the skills the colony required. Although from the latter part of that century the European immigrant encroached increasingly upon the skilled trades, a white monopoly of skills was far from complete. In the building industry in Cape Town the proportion of Coloured artisans varied from 50% of the carpenters to 95% of the plasterers.⁽²⁾ Similarly there was a preponderance of Coloured workers in tailoring, leather working and furniture making.⁽³⁾ In Natal also there was a tripartite relationship through the introduction into the colony of indentured Indian labourers. Although these, entering the country as they did after racial attitudes had hardened, constituted a more alien and less favoured element than the Cape Coloured people, they did, on expiry

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1. In 1921 there were only 2,534 artisans and 6,729 skilled labourers amongst the entire African population. (Union of South Africa: Report of the Third Census of Population 3rd May, 1921, U.G. 37 - 1924, p.244).
 2. Secretary of the Cape Peninsula Building Trades Joint Board, Cape Times 29th July, 1922.
 3. South African Trade Union Congress: Minutes of meeting of the National Executive Council with the Executives of the affiliated Unions 15th January, 1928 (B/UCT).

of their indentures, undertake skilled and semi-skilled work.⁽¹⁾ Elsewhere in the country, however, in the northern Cape, in the Transvaal, and especially in the Orange Free State, where Indians were not permitted to take up residence, European clashed directly with African and in this confrontation a total monopoly of skills was demanded by whites, both as trade unionists and as voters.⁽²⁾ In diamond mining at Kimberley and then in gold mining on the Witwatersrand, far and away the most important economic activity, European artisans performed most of the skilled work and were determined to exclude blacks. White trade unionists combined an inherited or recently acquired racial prejudice with the sectional interest of an "in-group" (that happened to be white) and were set on maintaining a privileged position against the "out-group" (that happened to be black), a source of cheap labour which employers, it was suspected, would not scruple to exploit in order to lower the market price of labour. In fact, however, the Chamber of Mines, all too anxious during the labour famine that followed the Boer War, not to antagonise the "in-group", placated it by offering a colour bar in the gold mining

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1. They dominated, for example, furniture making. (Ibid).
 2. To some extent the absence of blacks from the ranks of the skilled stemmed from the instability of the black labour force. Before 1914 most Africans were not prepared to hold a job sufficiently long to make it worth while for an employer to go to the trouble and expense of training them. On the other hand, those who did acquire skills found it difficult to obtain employment. (S.T. van der Horst: Native Labour in South Africa, Cape Town, 1942, p.236).

industry. At that time it was a question of excluding not Africans from reserved occupations but Chinese indentured workmen that the mine owners wanted to import in default of adequate African recruitment. The Transvaal Labour Importation Ordinance of 1904 confined the Chinese to unskilled work, or rather listed a considerable number of occupations from which they were shut out, and which had a future significance in that, after the last Chinese had left, they continued to be regarded as white preserves.⁽¹⁾ Although a feeling grew up among mine managers and engineers who rated greater efficiency and decreased costs above racial solidarity that skilled work should be opened to Africans, the necessity of continuing to defer to white opinion reinforced the legislative colour bar. In the Transvaal, and in the Orange Free State too, with the passing of the Mines and Works Act of 1911, "coloured persons" were not permitted, by regulations issued under the Act, to hold certificates of competency to perform specified tasks on the mines, while such certificates granted to these persons in Natal and the Cape Province were not valid in the two former provinces. The area of employment reserved for white men was subsequently enlarged by informal agreements between management and white labour.⁽²⁾

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1. I am indebted to Professor H.M. Robertson for letting me read an unpublished paper of his on the origins and economic effects of the colour bar in South Africa.
 2. S.T. van der Horst: Op.cit., p.171-172, 175-176, 179, 236, 238, 239.

After the 1914-1918 War, and more especially after 1924, when the South African Labour Party and the National Party formed a coalition government, it was the practice and attitudes of the bulk of the northern white workers that came to prevail throughout the entire country. For the subordinate racial groups it became increasingly difficult to escape from unskilled work, most of which the ruling race looked upon only with contempt, designating it "kafir work". This deep-rooted aversion to work associated with Africans was felt by none more strongly than the group whose economic circumstances were closest to those of the "Kafirs", the so-called poor whites. Their rôle in South African history between the wars was of great importance, and the political power they disposed of accounted in large measure for the racial division of the proletariat. Here lies a significant explanation for the divergence between the experience of South Africa and that of other racially mixed societies. In the United States the political power of the southern poor whites, fierce defenders of a social and political system of which they were not the prime beneficiaries, was reduced by the Civil War. In South Africa the poor whites, though defeated in the national equivalent of the American Civil War, the Boer War, were the victors in the political settlement that followed, the Act of Union, and found an ally in the skilled immigrants against the competition of the cheaper black labour. It was unfortunate for racial harmony that the white working class was able to satisfy its aspirations through political action and therefore did not need a class solidarity that transcended racial loyalty. It was also unfortunate

that the drift of the poor white into the towns preceded the beginning of the urbanisation of the African peasant, so that the two were brought into competition for the better type of employment. Yet a similar situation in Brazil brought quite different results. There too skilled immigrant confronted unskilled indigene, black and white; but the skilled immigrant did not make common cause with white indigene, and the criterion for admission into the elite was skill rather than race.⁽¹⁾ The impoverished white peasants that were compelled to seek employment in the towns commanded no political influence and arrived after the negroes had been accepted, with whatever reservations, by the immigrant proletariat, as in the United States. Indeed, it has been argued that the influx of poor whites into the towns was a positive benefit to the negroes, since the latter, already experienced in the ways of industrial society and therefore enjoying an advantage over the former, were displaced at the bottom of the social and economic hierarchy by the newcomers and moved up the scale.⁽²⁾

1. F. Fernandes: Op.cit., p.73.

2. R. Bastide: Loc.cit., p.24-25. Cf., however, F. Fernandes: Op.cit., p.183: "Prohibitions of a social character which were imposed on the negro and mulatto because of their inferior social position also affected the 'poor white' and the lower-class immigrant. They all made up the undifferentiated masses of the working class ... During the period under consideration (i.e. 1900-1930), while these prohibitions were generally toned down or slowly vanished with reference to whites, the opposite occurred in respect to negroes." Nevertheless, whatever the relative situation of black and poor white, it is clear that they competed for advantage in a system which each group was powerless to manipulate.

The outcome of the special circumstances of South Africa was, firstly, a geographical dichotomy in the trade union movement. Almost all of the dozen and a half trade unions in Cape Town were multi-racial⁽¹⁾ and almost all of them were grouped together in the Cape Federation of Labour Unions (or Trades), which had no colour bar, but was bound by its constitution to "secure a thorough organisation of all workers, skilled and unskilled, irrespective of race, colour, creed or sex."⁽²⁾ The South African Industrial Federation, on the other hand, the strength of which lay in the North, like its constituent unions, was rigidly discriminatory, however much its leaders denied colour prejudice⁽³⁾ and appealed to the principle of equal pay for equal work, regardless of the colour of the worker - the so-called rate for the job, which they used as an

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1. The Co-operative Masons' Society had a colour bar, which it owed to the pressure of its Transvaal members, as it was not restricted to the Cape. (Cape Times 21st April, 1919).
 2. Constitution of the Cape Federation (T.U.C.S.A. Papers). The Cape Federation was confined largely to the Western Cape. Its first conference of 1919 considered the possibilities of bringing in other local federations of the province. (Cape Times 22nd April, 1919).
 3. At the first conference of the Cape Federation in April, 1919, "Mr. Shaw (Vice-President, S.A. Industrial Federation) said he wanted to eliminate any misconceptions as regards the attitude of the Rand in regard to colour. There was no such thing as colour in his philosophy. The workman should get the full value of his labour. It was not the workers who made these distinctions, but the capitalists." A.F. Batty, who was unimpressed, asked "what was the use of him and others speaking in favour of the removal of the colour bar when there was a solid body of feeling against its removal on the Rand and in Natal." (Cape Times 21st April, 1919).

excuse for excluding African and Coloured workers in order to maintain the privileged position of the "in-group".⁽¹⁾ The differing attitudes of the Cape and the Transvaal were brought out at the time of the Government-sponsored National Conference of employers and workers, which was held at Pretoria in October, 1919. The Cape Federation, invited to send delegates, insisted on two Coloured observers to accompany its six white delegates, but subsequently the Minister of Mines and Industries intimated that only white delegates would be admitted, presumably because of the susceptibilities of the Transvaal unions. Although some of its members were in favour of sending representatives all the same, the Executive of the Federation, warned that acceptance of the invitation "would mean the breaking up of many of the unions that are mostly colour (sic)", decided by 18 votes to 6 to refuse to participate.⁽²⁾ In the Transvaal

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1. The Democratic Labour Party in Cape Town used the same principle as an argument for bringing blacks into the labour movement and extending the franchise. Thus J.H. Dean in December, 1918: "There was a clean cut line between the North and Cape on the Color (sic) line ... When a Native was considered competent to do work the same as white he must be considered civilised, and unless we recognise this position he would be a danger and must come into the body politic. As soon as he was to be used in competition he must be recognised as having political rights, otherwise he would be used to break down wages only ... It must be laid down that any man working at any trade he (sic) must receive the pay for that trade irrespective of colour or anything else." (Minutes of the Cape Federation 31st December, 1918).
 2. Minutes 11th and 19th September and 13th November, 1919. A.F. Batty and Robert Stuart subsequently received personal invitations which they accepted. This was thought disreputable, especially as Batty had seconded the motion declining the invitation. (Minutes 23rd and 24th October, 13th November and 4th December, 1919; R. Stuart to Acting Secretary for Mines and Industries 27th October and 24th November, 1919).

Coloured workers were denied both the privileges of trade union membership and the rewards of "scabbing". During the protracted strike of building workers that began in February, 1919, and lasted for seventy-three days, two thousand white strikers on the Rand forced three and a half thousand Coloured and African workers who were not allowed to join the union to be idle without any strike pay and, moreover, used violence to enforce a complete stoppage.⁽¹⁾ Secondly, the formation of unions for unskilled labour, difficult enough in homogeneous societies, meant organising a class not only underprivileged in economic terms, but also discriminated against on grounds of race.⁽²⁾ The unskilled labour movement in South Africa therefore tended to become preoccupied with racial grievances.

The obstacles to the unionisation of the unskilled are formidable anywhere. A trade union exists to extort from employers a better bargain for its members than they would be able to make individually, and a union can make a better bargain only if it represents at least a very substantial

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1. Union of South Africa: Annual Report of the Department of Justice for the Calendar Year 1919 (U.G. 35 - 1920), p.45; Cape Times 24th March, 1919.
 2. Whether or not unhindered trade union development would have been in the best interests of the African people as a whole is another issue. It is discussed by W.H. Hutt: The Economics of the Colour Bar; a Study of the Economic Origins and Consequences of Racial Segregation (London, 1964), Chapter II. Professor Hutt thinks that "the result of effective African labour unions would have been the attainment of a relatively small group of black employees of far higher standards of living, whilst the vast majority of Africans ... would have remained in the relatively poverty-stricken reserves or on the farms." (p.102). The experience of independent African countries seems to have borne out this contention.

proportion of the workers possessing the skill which employers require. The fewer the workers disposing of the skill, the easier it is to form a union and the stronger its bargaining position. Unskilled workers are the most numerous class of workers and, moreover, the poorest and worst educated. Not only is it difficult to persuade those in employment to enter a union (unless they are feeling particularly aggrieved), but also, in the early stages of industrialisation, there are, in urban slums and over-populated countryside, vast reserves of unemployed labour from which fresh recruits can be drawn to replace those who demand wages higher than the market price and who seek a remedy in organisation. While it is possible to exaggerate the impotence of such workers and to forget that even the "unskilled" do have a skill, however rudimentary, since even familiarity with the simplest of tools and with the discipline of industrial employment may be relatively uncommon in a primitive economy, and that employers may be willing to make concessions to their unskilled workers, even paying more than the market price for their labour to obviate the inconvenience and loss of profit that might be incurred in finding replacements,⁽¹⁾ it nonetheless remains

1. Cf. R. Stuart, Secretary of the Cape Federation, to the British Minister of Labour, 14th February, 1919: "... the Admiralty have said of course verbally that men required for the nature of employment (in the Simonstown dockyard) is plentiful (sic), and dissatisfied men can be replaced." (T.U.C.S.A. Papers). Yet the Admiralty, in spite of its strong bargaining position, was still willing to offer a 12½% pay rise. It must be a very ruthless capitalist indeed who is guided solely by motives of profit and, once convinced of the hardship afflicting his employees, is wholly indifferent to their needs, however dispensable they are.

true that only when the excess labour that saturates the market has been mopped up can such workers hope to lay claim to any great bargaining power, a situation reached late in the process of industrialisation. Until then they are caught in a vicious circle; too little valued to be able to demand adequate wages, too poor and too insecure to risk supporting an organisation that may secure for them a better bargain than they each obtain separately. It is scarcely to be wondered at that even in highly industrialised societies the workers of the "sweated trades" prove incapable of their own upliftment and must look, for an antidote to their helplessness, to protective legislation.⁽¹⁾

In South Africa, in this respect also apparently unique, a shortage of labour emerged early in the process of industrialisation; and, paradoxically in a country where under-employed labour resources abounded, Chinese labour had to be imported into the Transvaal for the gold mines and Indian labour into Natal for the sugar plantations. This premature labour shortage arose, however, only in mining and European

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1. "... industrial workers (in the wide sense of workers in the new trades that had grown up with industrialisation) were enabled to make themselves, first in small groups, and gradually in wider groups, into a class that was somewhat better privileged than the casual workers who still remained outside. Thus their wages would rise, well before the point was reached when the general surplus of labour was removed. Then, as the surplus began to be removed, there would be spread of organisation even among what was left of the casual workers & through General Workers' Unions, Trade Boards and so on. Thus it appeared that it was organisation that led to the higher wages; though that, in fact, was no more than a part of the truth." (J. Hicks: A Theory of Economic History, Oxford, 1969, p.156).

agriculture. Until artificial legal restraints were introduced there was rarely any shortage of unskilled labour for the docks, domestic service, municipal employment, construction, stores and factories.⁽¹⁾ The point was that conditions of employment in mining and commercial agriculture were so distasteful that sufficient labour could not be attracted from subsistence farming, which could accommodate large numbers of underemployed peasants preferring the harsh poverty of the tribal land to the austerities of employment in mine or on white farm. Where there is communal farming and poverty and ambition are not sharp enough spurs to a quest for industrial employment that offers meagre rewards, public authorities anxious to furnish agriculture or industry with labour must exert some kind of compulsion. In South Africa taxation was a powerful weapon used to induce Africans to seek paid employment.⁽²⁾ In such circumstances, where men are driven rather than drawn into employment, a shortage of labour is no more likely to promote trade unionism than a

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1. In post-war Port Elizabeth "... the demand for skilled workers is greater than the supply, and enables them to dictate their own terms. In regard to unskilled labour, the position is just the reverse. The supply is practically unlimited, and therefore any attempt on the part of the raw or unskilled worker to enforce his claim for an increased wage must necessarily prove very difficult." (Union of South Africa: Report of the Commissioners appointed to enquire into the causes of, and occurrences at, the Native disturbances at Port Elizabeth on the 23rd October, 1920, and the general economic conditions as they affect the Native and Coloured population, Annexure 143 - 1921, paragraph 15).
 2. S.T. van der Horst: Op.cit., p.317. In colonial Africa slavery, disguised slavery and forced labour were widely practised. In the Soviet Union the state resorted to labour supply agreements with collective farms. (M. Dobb: Soviet Economic Development Since 1917, 6th ed., London, 1966, p.483.

surplus of labour made available in those countries where capitalistic agriculture is the rule.

Another obstacle to the unionisation of the unskilled is the reluctance of country dwellers coming into towns in search of employment to reconcile themselves to permanent urban residence.⁽¹⁾ Where communal land holding persists the rural

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1. In England during the Industrial Revolution: "The English were long accustomed to a working holiday at harvest time, combining high earnings with a social occasion and permitting the women and children to glean the fallen ears for their winter flour ... The Yorkshire woollen industry was interrupted by the dispersal of men, women, and children to haymaking and harvesting ... Equally, throughout the eighteenth century iron furnaces and forges were brought to a seasonal halt by the preference of their operatives to go harvesting." (E.L. Jones: Agriculture and Economic Growth in England, 1650-1815, London, 1967, p.24).

In South Africa: "Nevertheless many Europeans coming into touch with the native only in the bigger centres seem inclined to over-estimate the number of 'detrified' natives. Such natives may have adopted a semi-European mode of life for several years, while it still remains a difficult matter for the white man to say how far tribal influence and connection has actually ceased. In 1914 a Free State Barolong chief bought land for his followers in the southern part of Rhodesia, and several natives, who had for years been in permanent and well-paid jobs in Bloemfontein and had never visited their tribe in Thaba Nchu, suddenly surprised their employers by giving notice that they were joining the trek, 'for our chief is calling us'." (J.F.W. Grosskopf, quoted by H.M. Robertson: The economic condition of the rural natives, in I. Schapera, ed., Western Civilisation and the Natives of South Africa : Studies in Culture Contact, London, 1934, p.143). The persistence of tribalism - or perhaps feudalism would be a more apt term in the case of those whose tribal organisation did not survive unimpaired (H.M. Robertson: One hundred and fifty years of economic contact between black and white, Part II, South African Journal of Economics, Volume 3, Number 1, March, 1935, p.6) - is another factor which helped to make the South African labour movement different from those of the racially mixed countries of the New World. The American negro, an involuntary immigrant, was cut off from tribalism the day he embarked on the slave ship, and he was drawn willy nilly into a pre-industrial market economy, so that he passed through an intermediate stage, as it were, on his way to proletarianisation.

emigrant has an even greater inducement to keep open his line of retreat to his village, frequently returning there for longer or shorter periods or, eventually, for good. Although growing towns may be embarrassed by the number of peasants offering themselves for employment, those who make up this surplus labour have not necessarily cut their ties with the land. Discontinuity of employment, so often to be found with unskilled work, is made more pronounced by absences in the country and hinders the task of organising industrial labour. Furthermore, the combination of urban employment with peasant farming means that the former tends to be regarded simply as a supplement to the proceeds of the latter.⁽¹⁾ Since the migrant labourer can fall back upon the proceeds of peasant agriculture and has, moreover, the habit of interrupting his period of employment, he is more likely to look for a remedy for low wages in new employment than in industrial organisation. Low wages themselves make union dues, however, small, heavy to bear, even if there is willingness to contribute to union funds from which the migrant labourer may never derive any advantage and also sufficient trust in union officials to use these funds honestly.⁽²⁾ In the early period of industrialisation in South Africa employers distinguished between the partially assimilated and wholly unassimilated African, referring to the latter as the "raw (or blanket) Kafir". The newcomer from the country, illiterate,

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1. G.V. Doxey: The Industrial Colour Bar in South Africa (Cape Town, 1961), p.85; W.H. Hutt: Op.cit., p.95.
 2. W. Elkan: Migrants and Proletarians; Urban Labour in the Economic Development of Uganda (London, 1960), p.61.

speaking no European language and thrust into an alien society with strange customs, was an unlikely recruit to an institution so typical of industrial society as a trade union. The African was compelled to play a game where he had only a vague idea of the rules and, for that matter, the purpose of the game. If the metaphor may be pressed further, one may well say that the rules have been constantly changed to make success at the game more difficult, or even impossible, and that there has never been an umpire or referee - only the well-meaning, but usually ineffectual, philanthropist lending support on the sidelines.

In time, of course, as industrialisation and urbanisation proceed, in societies where racial complications do not arise, the habit of irregular employment and the ambivalent attitudes, tenacious as these are, of the partially assimilated peasant may be expected to be modified. In industrialising South Africa, however, the instability of the labour force was fostered by the operation of the contract labour system that evolved in the gold and coal mining industries, partly because labour could be obtained in no other way, partly because of the attitude of the white miners' unions, which, by preventing the employment of Africans in skilled tasks, took away any incentive to the mining companies to build up a stable labour force, partly because of the reluctance of most of these companies to make provision for long-service married workers, partly

because of the hostility of public authorities and white public opinion to the permanent urbanisation of tribal Africans. In the contract system there was no place for the trade union. For the mining companies, collaborating to gain the advantages - the doubtful advantages - of "monopsonistic bargaining", purchasing labour at a pre-determined price in large quantities, depressed its market price and thus performed precisely the opposite function of trade unions, which seek to raise the market price through their power of withdrawing large quantities of labour and extorting a better bargain. Each African miner made his individual bargain - or rather gave his individual consent to a pre-arranged agreement - either with one of the recruiting agencies or with the mine to which he applied for employment, selling himself for an extended period of service for a remuneration that was uniform throughout the industry.⁽¹⁾ Then he and his fellows were housed in compounds, partially cut off from the outside world and its influences, "'encapsulated' in a rural and tribal ethos",⁽²⁾ an undigested lump in industrial society. Not only were they temporary immigrants from their

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1. S.T. van der Horst: Op.cit., p.193-197, 199ff; H.M. Robertson: One hundred and fifty years, etc., p.18-19; C.R. Diamond: African Labour Problems on the South African Gold Mines, with Special Reference to the Strike of 1946 (Unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Cape Town, 1969), Chapters 7 and 8.
 2. S.T. van der Horst: The effects of industry on race relations in South Africa (In G. Hunter, ed.: Op.cit.) p.120. Yet perhaps even compound life weakens this tribal ethos. Cf. W.H. Hutt: Op.cit., p.88.

permanent homes, but many of them came from beyond the political boundaries of South Africa and so were doubly alien. In such conditions the normal functioning of trade union organisation was practically impossible and even concerted action difficult. In 1913 African miners, roused by their grievances and stimulated by the example of their militant white fellow-workers, did take action together, but this was not the result of, nor did it lead to, unionisation. Even if conditions of employment had been conducive to organisation, the mine owners would have taken care to discourage it.

The Government was equally suspicious of trade unions for Africans, and, of course, the rôle of the state is crucial in the development of a labour movement. If the state intervenes, at one extreme, to ensure conditions of perfect atomistic competition, by prohibiting combinations of workmen, or, at the other extreme, to incorporate them, in a planned economy, into the state bureaucracy, trade unions are frustrated. Between these two extremes, they may be tolerated to a greater or lesser degree - barely tolerated, or recognised in the eyes of the law, or even allocated official or quasi-official functions. White and multi-racial trade unions in South Africa, though officially recognised before then, had no legally defined part to play in the wage fixing process until 1924, when they were assigned such a part by the Industrial Conciliation Act. The unionisation of Africans was subject to legislative discouragement. African mine workers came under the Native

Labour Regulation Act of 1911, which obviated, in theory, the need for trade unions by providing machinery for the examination and redress of grievances and rendered them, if they were established, impotent by forbidding strikes in proclaimed labour areas.⁽¹⁾ Since the "inspectors of native labourers" appointed under the Act were granted the power "to enter any compound or other place occupied by native labourers, and to arrest any native suspected of contravening any regulations",⁽²⁾ it may be assumed that safeguarding the employers' interests had a prior claim on their services. Outside these labour areas the situation of African labour was affected by a body of legislation passed at a time when African trade unions were unthought of, legislation composed of the various Masters and Servants Acts, going back to the Masters, Servants and Apprentices Ordinance of the Cape Colony (1841). These laws, by making breach of contract between employer and employee a criminal offence, not a civil wrong, in effect deprived the workman of his right to strike.⁽³⁾ Of great importance was the Cape Colony's Masters and Servants Act of 1856. Although this did not differentiate between the races and was apparently intended to enforce contracts between European, as well as non-European, servants and their masters, in fact its application did become

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1. S.T. van der Horst: ^{New Edition in S.A.} Op.cit., p.180.
 2. Union of South Africa: Act No. 15 of 1911, paragraphs 18 and 19.
 3. G.V. Doxey: Op.cit., p.128-129.

restricted to contracts between European masters and non-European servants, and similar legislation in the Orange Free State and Natal was certainly discriminatory.⁽¹⁾

Needless to say, it was the servant whose side of the contract was enforced by the courts with the greater alacrity. Yet, although the laws were harshly administered in the interests of the employers, they did offer a function to any potential labour organisation,⁽²⁾ since it was possible for a union to take up the cause of a victimised employee and pursue the defaulting employer into the courts; which, indeed, was one of the very things done by the I.C.U.

1. S.T. van der Horst: Op.cit., p.36-38. Cf., especially, p.39:- "That the application of these laws has been narrowed in practice is evident from the trend of court interpretations. For instance, giving judgment in 1903, Sir James Rose-Innes, who was then Chief Justice of the Transvaal, said: 'The legislature has, under certain circumstances, attached criminal consequences to the breach of what is essentially a civil contract; the Masters and Servants law must, therefore, be very strictly construed. When it is sought to subject any person to the penalties of the law he should receive the benefit of any doubt that may exist as to its application to his case.'

"This narrowing of the law and the actual use made of it, combined with the fact that most of the occupations subject to it are in fact carried on by non-Europeans, has inevitably meant that the penal sanction has been invoked chiefly in disputes between European masters and non-European servants."

2. W.H. Hutt: Op.cit., p.106.

Another piece of legislation that inhibited trade union activity was the Riotous Assemblies and Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1914, which, by curtailing the right of assembly, indirectly restrained the use of the strike weapon.⁽¹⁾ But, although their right to strike was circumscribed in these ways, Africans were not forbidden to form combinations and these would not have been without means of supporting their members or of prosecuting their own delinquent officials.⁽²⁾

Another aspect of state intervention in South Africa that hindered trade union development should be noticed, viz. restraints placed upon the mobility of African labour, ad hoc arrangements that varied from colony to colony in the interest of reducing vagrancy and facilitating the establishment of law and order. The various Ordinances and Acts that introduced them or altered them were loosely known as the "Pass Laws". They were more strictly administered in the northern provinces than in the Cape of Good Hope, where

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1. E. Kahn: The right to strike in South Africa; an historical analysis (South African Journal of Economics, March, 1943), p.27-28.
 2. That the law tolerated African trade unions may be inferred from the Native Affairs Act of 1920, which provided for the convening of conferences to which might be invited, among others, delegates from "any association or union purporting to represent any native ... economic interest". (Union of South Africa: Act 23 of 1920, paragraph 16, sub-section 1). A number of delinquent officials were successfully prosecuted by the I.C.U. In 1924 M. Alexander (M.L.A. for Hanover Street, Cape Town) asked the Minister of Justice in the House of Assembly "whether there is anything to prevent coloured and native workers from forming trade unions in the same way as other sections of workers." The answer was: "So far as I am aware there is nothing". (Union of South Africa: Debates of the House of Assembly 2nd September, 1924).

the law of 1867, which had simplified existing legislation of this nature, fell into disuse in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and in Natal, where a law of 1884 requiring Africans to obtain a pass before entering or leaving the colony was not very effectively enforced. In the Orange Free State and the Transvaal, before their annexation by Great Britain, Africans on the move were required to have written passes. Other rules were more particularly concerned with urban residence. In the inland provinces the right of Africans to take up residence in towns was more severely controlled than in Natal, where only Durban and Pietermaritzburg insisted upon the registration of day labourers (togt labourers), or in the Cape, where there was no restriction upon movement into the towns, though in some Africans were required (in theory rather than in practice) to reside either in a location or on their employers' premises.⁽¹⁾

A third aspect of public policy was exemplified, not by the (in practice) discriminatory side of the Masters and Servants Acts, but by the provisions of those Acts which sought to guarantee certain rights to the employee, that is the paternalism which is by no means free of discriminatory intent, nor untinged with racial prejudice, but which, nevertheless, represents a paradoxical strain in white

1. S.T. van der Horst: Op.cit., p.29-34, 123-124, 143-144, 270.

racial attitudes. Public authorities in South Africa, state and municipal, and great employers were not always indifferent to the welfare of black workers, but sometimes insisted upon or furnished model accommodation and medical services, though obviously never for entirely disinterested motives. For the mining industry the Native Labour Regulation Act of 1911, in addition to those clauses which sought to stop trade union activity, aimed also to prevent abuses in the recruitment of labour for the gold mines,⁽¹⁾ established minimum standards of accommodation, food and medical facilities, and compensation for injuries, an Act "based entirely on the idea of a paternal Government looking after the interests of the people concerned".⁽²⁾ Although such paternalism should not be overrated, since Africans in mine compounds and most urban locations lived in bleak and uncomfortable conditions, benefits and services stemming from paternalistic attitudes did diminish the need and demand for trade unions and no doubt helped to inhibit their development in the mining industry. Trade unions flourish upon a mixed diet of opportunity and grievance, and they do best when plenty of men are at work and willing to part with the subscriptions and when there is little competition for jobs, yet when prices are rising faster than wages, thus providing a most obvious grievance. It is at such times, too, when attention is no longer rivetted upon obtaining or retaining

1. Ibid. p. 194.

2. Union of South Africa: Industrial Legislation Commission of 1951 (U.G. 62 - 1951), quoted by G.V. Doxey: Op.cit., p. 130.

employment that thought can be spared for other, less pressing needs, particularly adequate housing. The extent to which these needs are met by a kindly government will sweeten more or less the acerbity of working class militancy.

It would be incorrect, however, to suppose that the chief hazard facing African and Coloured trade unions was that of being killed with kindness. The obstacles to organisation were harsh and forbidding and the chances, in the early years of industrialisation, of their being surmounted seemed slim. Yet, in Cape Town, where Kadalie was starting his I.C.U. in 1919, for a short time just after the war the circumstances were peculiarly favourable. Apart from the influence of the war itself and of Coloured and African participation in it, which must have contributed to the growth of self-confidence and self-assertiveness,⁽¹⁾ economic conditions were propitious. The South African economy was booming. The upward swing that began early in 1915 was reaching its peak, a prosperity that owed much to

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1. "We have reached a stage of development which now calls for the immediate change of native policy. The reason of the black man to-day is that he is no longer the suppressed natural servant of the white man, nor is the white man naturally superior to him by virtue of his skin, which he employs to his advantage against the black man. We say to these dunce farmers that preservation of their skins passed with the Great European war, when we were called upon to save their women and children from becoming German serfs." (The Black Man, quoted in the Cape Times 30th August, 1920).

industrialisation stimulated by the war, which had made imported manufactures difficult to obtain and expensive to buy. Industrial output and employment increased,⁽¹⁾ and, in Cape Town, and the Western Province of the Cape as a whole, one of the areas where industrial development was especially marked, unskilled labour was in short supply.⁽²⁾ This was not for long, what with the return of demobilised soldiers and a growing influx of Africans from distant parts, but nonetheless there was no large reservoir of black labour, the nearest abundant supply being the Eastern Province of the Cape, a long and expensive journey away. At the same time there were grievances: wages were low and the price

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1. C.G.W. Schumann: Structural Changes and Business Cycles in South Africa, 1806-1936 (London, 1938), p.168, 244-245.
 2. Cape Times 23rd December, 1918. "In Cape Town the demand for unskilled labour exceeded the supply. The servant problem had become acute in the city and in the suburbs, notwithstanding that good wages were being paid, and large numbers of families had to do without them for the simple reason that no servants were to be got. This the magistrate attributes to the fact that factories were absorbing more and more girls and boys every year, and also to the deaths caused by the influenza epidemic of 1918." (Union of South Africa: Annual Report of the Department of Justice for the Calendar Year 1919, U.G. 35 - 1920, p.58).

off basic foodstuffs soaring.⁽¹⁾ The wartime boom was mainly a "price boom",⁽²⁾ and complaints about the cost of living were widespread and strident amongst Europeans, as well as Coloured and African people. The index of the retail price

1. Estimated weekly food costs of an adult male African in Cape Town, 1919 -

Maize meal	50.4 oz.	8.01 d.
Boer meal	71.4	14.99
Bread	46.2	11.91
Rice	0.7	0.23
Meat (cheapest)	39.2	14.70
Beans	0.7	?
Sugar	30.8	8.28
Jam	1.4	0.6
Milk (condensed)	3.5	2.95
Milk (fresh)	1.05 pints	4.07
Tea, coffee, etc.	2.1 oz.	2.46
Salt	2.8	0.17
Mixed vegetables	?	3.50
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		71.87 d. approx. 6s.

Based on the average daily diet of an adult male African at De Beers Consolidated Mines (Union of South Africa, Office of Census and Statistics: Social Statistics No. 4 - 1922; Statistics of Wages and Industrial Matters and of Retail and Wholesale Prices, Rents and Cost of Living, 1895 to 1922, p.25) in 1919 Cape Town prices (Union of South Africa, Office of Census and Statistics: Social Statistics No. 2 - 1920; Statistics of Retail and Wholesale Prices, Rents and Cost of Living, p.40ff).

A family of four would have a calorie requirement of - at the very least - two and a half times that of a single male manual worker. (Cf. S. Suttner: Cost of Living in Soweto 1966, Johannesburg, 1966, p.8).

A minimum wage of 4s. a day was accepted in principle by a conference of employers in Cape Town in December, 1918. At that time some married African workers were receiving 3s. a day. (Cape Times 13th December, 1918).

2. C.G.W. Schumann: Op.cit., p.245.

of food in Cape Town rose from 870 in 1910 (base - average of nine towns⁽¹⁾ in 1910 = 1000) to 1520 in 1919 (and was to rise to 1978 in 1920), a rise of 74.7%. More striking because of their significance for the diet of poorer people was the rise in the retail price of cereals, the index (for Cape Town) going from 866 in 1910 (base as before) to 1842 in 1919 (and 2733 in 1920), a rise of 112.7%.⁽²⁾

A major grievance at Cape Town (as elsewhere), by no means confined to non-Africans, was overcrowded and, in some cases, expensive housing. African residents had two locations, both run by the Government, the Docks Location for single men and the much larger one at N'dabeni for both married and single. The former was for men working at the docks and in 1918 held 750.⁽³⁾ The latter, built in 1902, when there was an outbreak of plague, and accommodating 700 originally, by the end of the war had a population of about 3,500,⁽⁴⁾ which was something like 1,500 in excess of what it could reasonably hold.⁽⁵⁾ Hurriedly erected, it was an uncomfortable place in which to live, as one gathers from what a Unionist Member of

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1. Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London, Kimberley, Pietermaritzburg, Durban, Pretoria, Johannesburg and Bloemfontein.
 2. There was a decided up-swing in food prices in the last quarter of 1919 and the first month of 1920.
 3. They lived twenty-eight to a hut and paid 6s. a month each. (Cape Times 19th December, 1919).
 4. Cape Times 21st June, 1919.
 5. Cape Archives: Resume of Minutes of Proceedings of Council, City of Cape Town, Agendas, Reports and Resumes Book, Volume 1, Parcel 86, Item 161, 27th February, 1919.

Parliament, J.W. Mushet, had to say about it in February, 1920, at a meeting held to discuss the housing problem in Cape Town. He

"described the kennel-like huts which had been erected. During the late epidemic he counted 12 natives in one hut, and a friend counted 14, there being only sufficient air for two persons. He accused the Government of rack-renting at the location. There were no streets at N'dabeni, no lights, and the huts were scorchingly hot in summer and too cold in winter; he thought the death-rate there was the highest in any area of the Peninsula. When the 'limelight' was turned on the Government remedies matters by turning the natives out, and then these natives were prosecuted by the municipalities because they contravened the regulations ..." (1)

Beside the discomfort of the houses and lack of amenities (which did, however, include a free hospital and dispensary), there were administrative inadequacies. The Superintendent did not reside in the Location and policing overnight was

1. The Cape Argus 11th February, 1920. The Government wanted to rid itself of the responsibility of running the Location and hand it over to the municipal authorities, who were willing to take it on, but only provided that the state would make available suitable land to enlarge it or construct a new one. (Cape Archives: Agendas, Reports and Resumes Book, Volume 1, Parcel 86, Item 161, 1919, Report from the Finance, Health and Building Regulations, General Purposes, and Housing and Estimates Committees sitting as a Joint Committee, 16th October, 1919). Bickering went on for months and towards the end of 1919, its patience worn out, the Government threatened to let loose a horde of Africans upon the town by withdrawing the proclamation that made residence compulsory in a location. (Cape Archives: Loc.cit., E. Barrett, Acting Secretary for Native Affairs, to the Town Clerk of Cape Town, 14th-15th (sic) November, 1919). The threat was not carried out, but it was not until 1925 that Cape Town took over management of the Location. (Cape Archives: Minutes of Meetings of Native Affairs Committee, City of Cape Town, Volume II, Parcel 107, Item 339, Report of Dr. Leram on Enquiry into certain complaints against Mr. G.P. Cook, Superintendent of the N'dabeni Location, 1927).

left in the hands of African constables whose incompetence was privately admitted by the South African Police.⁽¹⁾ Hundreds of Africans,⁽²⁾ unable or unwilling to find accommodation in the Locations, found expensive and precarious lodgings chiefly in "that unsavoury quarter of the town, District Six".⁽³⁾ The police, attempting to enforce the residence laws, hounded these illegal city dwellers from one part of the city to another.⁽⁴⁾

Africans resident in Cape Town lived in among the Coloured people. The two communities were not nearly so mutually exclusive as were, for example, Indians and Africans in Natal. There was a certain amount of inter-marriage. Both the Kadalie brothers married Coloured women. It is true that in some respects the situation of those of mixed race was better than that of Africans. For, generally speaking, their task of adjustment to a

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1. Cape Archives: Minutes of Meetings of the Native Affairs Committee, City of Cape Town, Volume II, Parcel 107, Item 339, Deputy Commissioner, S.A.P., Cape Town, to Secretary for Native Affairs, 30th May, 1927).
 2. Estimated by J.W. Mushet at six hundred. (The Cape Argus 11th February, 1920).
 3. Umteteli wa Bantu 19th May, 1923. Dr. Abdurahman estimated in 1918 that one quarter of the Coloured children born in the Cape Town municipal area died before their first birthday. (Cape Times 21st December, 1918).
 4. Those legally entitled to live outside a location were registered parliamentary voters, those with property worth £75 a year and domestic servants. (Cape Archives: Agendas, Reports and Resumes Book, Volume 1, Parcel 86, Item 161, 23rd January, 1919).

European-dominated society was a much less formidable one, since culturally they had close ties with Europeans, spoke either Afrikaans or English or both, and had a higher degree of literacy,⁽¹⁾ while their admission into the skilled trades and craft unions was an accepted practice in Cape Town. Nevertheless, like Africans, many Coloured workers had been forced off the land by rural impoverishment and compelled to take up unskilled employment in the towns. The two groups had sufficient common economic interest to make co-operation feasible, and the possibility existed of forming a general union in which the less sophisticated Africans could find support and encouragement from a people better equipped to wrest from the prevalent economic system whatever advantages accrued to organisation. It was from the Coloured community that Kadalie drew a substantial part of his initial support. In later years he paid tribute to them:

"Tribal and colour prejudice had to be buried and it is a credit to the Coloured people of Cape Town who, for the first time in the annals of this country, joined the great pilgrimage towards the land of promise. They joined the new movement and disregarded colour prejudice. And they supplied the sinews of war." (2)

There were several organisations trying to draw in the unskilled Coloured workers. One of the earliest was the South African Workmen's Co-operative Union, founded in

1. G.V. Doxey: Op.cit., p.97.

2. Manifesto of 9th July, 1928 (B/UCT).

July, 1918, which admitted Africans and included amongst its members unskilled employees of the Cape Town municipality, an important employer, some of whose unskilled labourers were organised in another union, the Cape Town Municipal Workers' Association.⁽¹⁾ Of greater importance for the I.C.U. was the general union known as the Industrial Workers of Africa, started in Johannesburg in 1917 under the aegis of the International Socialist League.⁽²⁾ The leaders of this were H. Kraai and R. Cetyiwe, who came down from Johannesburg in the course of 1919 and took up residence in Cape Town, in or before August.⁽³⁾ Like the

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1. Cape Archives: Minutes of the Cape Town Native Affairs Committee, Volume II, Parcel 107, Item 339 and Volume III, Parcel 108, Item 340; Agendas, Reports and Resumes Book, City of Cape Town, Volume I, Parcel 88, Item 163, 1920. The Municipal Workers' Association should not be confused with the Cape Town branch of the Municipal Employees' Association, which was a multi-racial union for artisans and salaried staff. The former had 1100 members in 1919. (Union of South Africa, Office of Census and Statistics: Social Statistics No. 3 - 1921; Statistics of Wages and Industrial Matters and of Retail and Wholesale Prices, Rents, and Cost of Living, 1895 to 1921, p.53).
 2. Union of South Africa: Report of the Martial Law Inquiry Judicial Commission (Pretoria, 1922), p.28.
 3. Cape Times 9th October, 1919. Kraai had a bad reputation with the police, whose information, however, was not always to be relied on. He was "alleged to have been convicted in the Union and sentenced to 5 years' I.H.L. which term he served in Kimberley gaol, and whilst incarcerated there, committed the crime of sodomy and received for that a further 18 months I.H.L. He is reputed to be a member of the Ninevite gang and is employed by Longworth & Co., Woollen Merchants, 46 Longmarket Street, Capetown." (Central Archives: Department of Justice 3/1064/18, Commissioner, South African Police to Secretary for Justice 30th November, 1920). The Ninevite gang was a secret society dedicated to murder and robbery.

I.C.U., the South African Workmen's Co-operative Union and the Industrial Workers of Africa had ties with political parties or, rather, pressure groups. If the I.C.U. was the child of the Democratic Labour Party, the S.A.W.C.U., while it did receive some encouragement from the South African Labour Party,⁽¹⁾ was - or became - more closely associated with the Coloured A.P.O., the African Political (later People's) Organisation,⁽²⁾ which was led by Dr. Abdurahman and was dedicated to the extension of political rights to all Coloured people in the Union of South Africa. The I.W.A., which was exclusively African and had worked in Johannesburg in collaboration with the Transvaal section of the South African Native National Congress, the Transvaal Native National Congress, similarly in Cape Town worked with the Cape Native National Congress,⁽³⁾ with which, however, it did not enter a formal relationship

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1. A meeting of the Maitland branch was addressed in December, 1918, by J. Lomax and J. Carver of the Labour Party. The latter, with strange logic, urged his audience to raise "their standard of living and education, otherwise they would be swamped by the native labourer, who could afford to work for lower wages." (Cape Times 31st December, 1918). It is not impossible that the foundation of the I.C.U. by the D.L.P. was a counter-blast to the establishment of the S.A.W.C.U.
 2. In August, 1919, the A.P.O. formed the A.P.O. Federation of Labour exclusively for Coloured workers and induced a number of S.A.W.C.U. branches to join it. (A.P.O. 12th September, 1919).
 3. The South African Native National Congress, founded in 1912 to prosecute African interests in all spheres, was a loosely organised body made up of provincial congresses that were largely autonomous. The Cape provincial organisation was not formally constituted until October, 1919 (Z.R. Mahabane: The Good Fight; Selected Speeches, Evanston, n.d., p.1), when the S.A.N.N.C. adopted its first constitution, but there was a branch of the national organisation at N'dabemi before then.

until May, 1920.⁽¹⁾ It was a somewhat surprising partnership, seeing that, whereas the I.W.A. certainly began, even if it did not continue, as a militant body seeking a profound change in South African society, Congress was as a rule a conservative and moderate body, appealing to both the westernised elite and the tribal chiefs. Typically the President of the Cape Congress, the Rev. Z.R. Mahabane,⁽²⁾ was a Wesleyan minister. Before the advent of the I.C.U. and the I.W.A. Congress seems to have been the chief channel for the communication of African grievances. At least it is reasonable to assume that the deputation which was received by the Mayor of Cape Town and representatives of the Cape Manufacturers' Association, the Chamber of Commerce and South African Railways and Harbours in December, 1918, and which put in a request for a minimum wage for African labour of 4s. a day, was organised by Congress.⁽³⁾ The request had a favourable response from the Manufacturers' Association and the Chamber of Commerce.⁽⁴⁾

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1. It was accepted "as a branch of Congress" at the first annual conference of the Cape N.N.C. (Central Archives: Department of Justice 3/127/20, Report of C.I.D., Johannesburg to Secretary, South African Police 28th May, 1920). This conference, which opened on 20th May, was held shortly before the conference of the S.A.N.N.C. at the same place, Queenstown. (The Queenstown Daily Representative and Free Press 22nd and 27th May, 1920).
 2. Born 1881 at Thaba Nchu, Orange Free State, ordained 1914, stationed Cape Town 1916, and elected President of the Cape N.N.C. in 1919. (Z.R. Mahabane: Op.cit., p.i-ii).
 3. Cape Times 13th December, 1918.
 4. The Cape Argus 24th March, 1919.

were The relationship between the I.C.U., on the one hand, and the I.W.A. and the Cape N.N.C., on the other, seems to have been somewhat cool. To an extent the I.C.U. and the I.W.A. competed for membership, because the latter was also recruiting among dock labourers. More of the I.C.U.'s members were Coloured than African,⁽¹⁾ but it did apparently attract a number of Africans who were dissatisfied with Congress.⁽²⁾ Congress, in turn, was suspicious of the intrusion of the alien Kadalie.⁽³⁾ Discussions

1. Letter from C. Kadalie to Editor, Cape Times 17th October, 1919. (Cape Times 22nd October, 1919). This is Kadalie's earliest extant letter and carried the editorial comment: "We have had to delete portions of this letter which are unintelligible." Certainly, as printed, it falls far short of his later competence in English. With regard to the composition of the I.C.U.'s membership, it can be deduced from the names of the I.C.U. Executive elected in January, 1920, that most of the officials and committee members were Coloured. Of the thirteen only three were indisputably African (including Kadalie). (Cape Times 21st January, 1920). Two, J.G. Gumbs and James King, were West Indian, and there may have been others. (C. Kadalie: My Life, p.220).
2. "It is being claimed on behalf of the native workers of the Union that, as they have failed to obtain redress of their alleged grievances by political means, they will endeavour to do so by industrial organisation." (Cape Times 9th October, 1919). 1919 was the year of the despatch of an expensive and abortive delegation to the Imperial Government and the Versailles Peace Conference. It is clear that Congress did not have a very substantial membership - 1,200 throughout the entire Cape (P. Walshe: The Rise of African Nationalism: the African National Congress 1912-1952, London, 1970, p.225, 248 - though its influence undoubtedly extended beyond its subscribing membership).
3. "In 1919 the I.C.U. was started and Kadalie raised the battle cry, 'The African, at any and all costs, must be freed economically and socially.' Men and women doubted the authenticity of this new African gospel, more so because it came through a man who could not speak or understand the language of Tshaka, Moshoeshoe and Hintsa. The African National Congress was there ... All big men (sic) were there ... The question was: 'Who was this leader of the I.C.U.?' Some people were sincere in asking this question, but the majority were actuated by the spirit of jealousy, tribal prejudice and other motives that have ever been responsible for the destruction of all efforts to organise Africans for self-protection and economic emancipation." (A.W.G. Champion: The Truth about the I.C.U., Durban, 1927, p.24).

were held in August, 1919, between the I.C.U. and the I.W.A. on the possibility of an amalgamation,⁽¹⁾ but without immediate result and the two continued to operate separately. A major stumbling block to unification was the tie between the I.C.U. and the D.L.P. and the Cape Federation. For the I.W.A. wanted nothing to do with Europeans, did not even want to tolerate their presence at meetings, an attitude engendered in the harsh racial climate of the Transvaal.⁽²⁾ The I.C.U.'s connection with the white labour movement also made co-operation with both the Cape Congress and the African Political Organisation difficult. Dr. Abdurahman, while being alive to their faults, consistently supported the Unionists (and subsequently the South African Party), and there was little love lost between him and the D.L.P.⁽³⁾ Congress, too, recommended voters to support the Unionists in the general election of March, 1920.⁽⁴⁾

Alone among the unaffiliated general unions the I.C.U. received an invitation to attend the first conference of the Cape Federation of Labour Unions held in Cape Town in

1. Cape Times 9th October, 1919.

2. Ibid. The I.W.A. leaders were "said to have expressed the opinion that they object to the whites as dangerous." It is possible that this was the result of disenchantment with their Johannesburg sponsors, the International Socialists, who, during the industrial disturbances of 1918, had apparently promised support from white labour that in the event was not forthcoming.

3. Cape Times 14th February, 1920.

4. A.P.O. 12th September, 1919.

April, 1919, being represented by Joe Paulse and J.H. Dean (who also spoke for the Operative Bakers' Union). A.F. Batty (for the Amalgamated Society of Engineers) and F. Rayner (for Bioscope Union) also attended. Paulse raised the question of low wages for unskilled workers and stressed the need for an adequate minimum wage. Batty, Dean and Rayner urged the removal of the trade union colour bar wherever it existed, but this was not their only interest. They also advocated a sort of "back to the land" movement, state appropriation of unused land for co-operative farming, for labour colonies and afforestation, which would provide work for demobilised soldiers, poor whites and unemployed.⁽¹⁾

Kadallie did not attend, or did not speak at, the Federation's conference. His first recorded public appearance was in November, 1919, when he shared a platform with Dean and Paulse of the I.C.U. and Dr. Abdurahman and gave vent to some strong sentiments.⁽²⁾ He began by urging the

1. Cape Times 21st and 22nd April, 1919.

2. It would be unwise, however, to generalise about I.C.U. policy from isolated speeches. Less than three months earlier the I.C.U. had addressed the following message to the Acting Prime Minister, F.S. Malan: "Sir, all true and loyal citizens of South Africa, both white and black, at this critical moment are shocked by the unspeakable loss sustained through the death of General Botha. We know our late Premier not only in his military capacity, but as a worthy father, statesman and a leader of all classes in this country. General Botha was always ready when duty called and now after victory has been achieved could have devoted himself to the solution of the native problem. In his death all natives in the territories and towns mourn the loss of a worthy father and peacemaker." (Cape Times 2nd September, 1919).

solidarity of African and Coloured workers against the capitalist and the white worker, and he went on to counsel defiance of the Government. "Constitutional means were of no avail. The Coloured people had begged and appealed to the Government long enough." Another speaker, William Fife, "was tired of evolutionary methods, and he could see the letter 'r' rapidly approaching to be attached to that word evolutionary. In their treatment of the coloured man the white working man was simply playing up to the capitalist or parasite class, whatever they like to call them." Applause greeted his reference to the whites as "a damn lot of donkeys." Abdurahman suggested to the audience that the enemy was not the white man, but injustice, and he stressed the need for co-operation between Coloured and African. They must organise themselves and insist upon an adequate wage. Dean, carried away, said that

"the black man had suffered under injustice for long enough, and it was time that they brought it to an end, even if it was necessary to cause a revolution in order to do so. Labour was always cheap unless it was organised, and the only way for the black man to get his dues was by making things uncomfortable for the white man." (1)

By November, the I.C.U., which, since its foundation in January, had begun to call itself the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of South Africa instead of

1. Cape Times 22nd November, 1919.

simply the Industrial and Commercial Union, had a reported membership of a thousand, mostly, though not wholly, dock-labourers.⁽¹⁾ The docks were undoubtedly a propitious field for industrial organisation. For not only did the dockers constitute the largest single black labour force in Cape Town, but also, for purposes of negotiating, there were only a few large employers, the South African Railways and Harbours Administration and a few shipping and stevedoring firms. The S.A.R. and H. employed Africans for bunkering and African and Coloured workers on the railways. The stevedores employed by the private firms were both Coloured and African. What all these workers had in common was profound and long-standing discontent over wages. These had risen, it is true, but lagged behind the growing cost of living. Well before the war dock labourers' wages had been 4s. a day, with 9d. an hour extra for overtime.⁽²⁾ Since then minor improvements had been made by the S.A.R. and H. in the basic rate. Firstly the Saturday payment was raised from 2s. to 3s. and then, in February, 1918, a war bonus of 7d. a day (a 14.5% increase) was granted to married men and 2d. a day (a 4.1% increase) to single men, with proportionately larger bonuses to those already earning more than the

1. Cape Times 9th and 22nd October, 1919.

2. The South African Native Races Committee (ed.): The South African Natives; their Progress and Present Conditions (A Supplement to The Natives of South Africa; their Economic and Social Condition) (London, 1908), p.37.

basic wage, that is the "sorters", whose wage went up to 6s.9d. a day, and the "serangs" (foremen), who now earned between 7s.6d. and 9s.10d. a day, according to length of service. A subsequent concession was that Saturday was to be paid as a full day. Dock-labourers usually earned between 40s. and 50s. weekly, but they could sometimes earn up to 60s. a week by working exceptionally long hours, and they also were assured of pretty regular employment. The work of the stevedores employed by the private firms was much more irregular, very full weeks with plenty of overtime alternating with weeks when work was hard to come by, perhaps only two or three days a week, all depending upon the number of ships coming in and the supplies of bunkering coal available.⁽¹⁾

Agitation for a wage increase predated the formation of the I.C.U. Twice in 1918 the dockworkers put in an application to the private employers for a rise, to no avail, being threatened on the second occasion, in December, 1918, with dismissal and replacement by fresh labour from the "territories" - the tribal lands.⁽²⁾ In September, 1919, the I.C.U. took up the wage issue,⁽³⁾ requesting the

1. Cape Times 9th October, 19th and 20th December, 1919.

2. Cape Times 22nd December, 1919. The Railways and Harbours Administration claimed that no request for higher wages was made after the rise of February, 1918. (Cape Times 20th December, 1919).

3. Cape Times 23rd December, 1919.

private employers (but evidently not the Railways and Harbours Administration) to increase the daily rate to 7s.6d., a request likewise ignored. A further demand - also to the private employers - was made on 9th December, this time for 8s.6d. for labourers and 12s.6d. for foremen, a demand supported by the Secretary of the Federation of Trades, Robert Stuart.⁽¹⁾ Then, just over a week later, a strike that was not wholly connected with the pay dispute was precipitated.

The dock strike of December, 1919, which made the I.C.U.'s name, was not, any more than the formation of the Union itself, an isolated event, but rather the most important of a series of industrial disputes involving African and Coloured labour. A government report of 1920 noted that

"with the exception of one strike in the Cape Province, involving 35 native labourers, none of the strikes which took place during 1918, involved native or coloured workers specifically; whereas in 1919 many of the strikes which took place were run by native and coloured workers only.

"In past years coloured workers have occasionally been involved in strikes, due to their relationship with Trades Unions, more especially in the Cape Province, where they have been employed in the skilled trades, but a new and noteworthy feature has now been introduced into the industrial arena and native and coloured unskilled labourers throughout the Union have adopted the strike weapon as a means of enforcing higher wages and better conditions." (2)

1. Cape Times 20th December, 1919.

2. Union of South Africa: Annual Report of the Factories Division, Department of Mines and Industries, for the Period 1st May, 1919, to 31st December, 1919 (U.G. 42 - 1920), p.28.

Two strikes, both successful, in Cape Town are worth notice for their length and the racial composition of the strikers: one, in July, 1919, involving three hundred Europeans and one hundred and twenty Coloured and African workers of the City Tramways, a strike that lasted twenty-five days;⁽¹⁾ the other, in September, 1919, involving three hundred Coloured and African painters and lasting thirteen days.⁽²⁾

Not only was the dock strike the climax of a series of strikes, it also drew strength from the encouragement and support, not only of such regular supporters as Dean, who was chairman of the strike committee, and Rayner, who was its treasurer,⁽³⁾ but also of other trade unions and, what is more, of a substantial segment of public opinion, which applauded at least one of the strike's objectives. Indeed, the chances of success of the strike depended largely upon the attitude and policy of the Cape Federation and the National Union of Railway and Harbour Servants, since the I.C.U. entered upon it with the backing of

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1. A.F. Batty was concerned in this as a member of the executive of the Cape Federation. (Cape Times 30th July, 1919). There was some talk of a general strike in support of the tramwaymen. (Minutes of the Cape Federation 25th July, 1919, T.U.C.S.A. Papers).
 2. Union of South Africa: Annual Report of the Factories Division 1919, p.45. The painters had struck in December, 1918, as well. (Cape Times 2nd December, 1918).
 3. New Africa 14th September, 1929. Batty was occupied with his work on the Cost of Living Commission.

both.⁽¹⁾ One aim of the strike - and this was where the interests of the other unions lay - was to bring an end to the export of foodstuffs, in the belief that prices were high because so much was being sent out of the country, a belief that gained widespread currency in the later months of 1919. While to suggest that the high prices could be explained wholly in terms of excessive exporting and profiteering (the two being associated in the public mind) was an over-simplification in an inflationary situation, there was a substantial element of truth in it. It seems to be quite clear that certain agricultural products were being exported when there was insufficient for domestic consumption at a price within reach of the poorer classes.⁽²⁾ In spite of an exceptionally severe drought in the Eastern Province of the Cape and elsewhere in South Africa in the winter of 1919, which sent up, in particular, the price of maize, the staple diet of the African people, the Government continued to permit considerable exports. Towards the end of the year, so desperate was the shortage

1. Although the N.U.R.H.S. was a white union, it seemed to admit African and, more particularly, Coloured railway workers into separately organised branches, and this caused indignation among the African members of the I.C.U., presumably those who were excluded because they worked for the S.A.R. and H. in the docks and not on the railways. In May, 1919, there was a meeting of black railwaymen under the auspices of the Cape Town Harbour branch of the Union to protest against "the decision of the Railway Administration to limit the payment of coloured war bonus to the Cape Coloured staff, as distinct from Indians and Natives, and to further limit the payment of such bonus as from April 1, 1919." (Cape Times 5th May and 9th October, 1919).

2. Cape Times 23rd July, 1919.

of maize in the Transkei, that it had to undertake relief measures.⁽¹⁾

At some point during the course of November the idea struck labour leaders that something could be done to bring food exports to a halt. Wherever it originated, it was not with the railwaymen, though they were the ones who talked most about it. For in the early part of the month the N.U.R.H.S., while noting the connection between the cost of living and the export of necessities, concluded that there was nothing for it but to demand higher wages.⁽²⁾ The first move appears to have come from the Cape Town dockers, who later that same month protested against loading a ship with beef for export.⁽³⁾ Whether this protest was spontaneous and gave the idea to the Cape Federation of putting an embargo upon exports, or whether Dean and Stuart had already discussed this line of action, there is no means of telling. At all events, on 27th November a meeting of the Federation's Executive decided to ask its affiliated unions not to handle exports of foodstuffs, though Stuart was privately convinced that this would not bring down the cost of living.⁽⁴⁾ The immediate

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1. Cape Times 31st December, 1919. According to D.D.T. Jabavu maize was selling at thirty shillings a bag in the Eastern Province. (Cape Times 19th December, 1919). This was apparently three times the usual price. (Cape Times 22nd December, 1919).
 2. Cape Times 4th November, 1919.
 3. Cape Times 25th November, 1919.
 4. R. Stuart to unnamed correspondent 6th January, 1920 (T.U.C.S.A. Papers).

cause of the decision was the export of meat that had occasioned the dockers' protest and the news that 4,000 cases of South African eggs had been landed in Europe.⁽¹⁾ Then on 3rd December the Executive of the N.U.R.H.S., which was not affiliated to the Cape Federation, also resolved to tell its members not to handle such exports. Although they were not influenced by this in adopting their resolution, the railwaymen gained the impression immediately afterwards that the Government had already decided to prohibit further exports and therefore felt fully justified in claiming that a union embargo was strengthening the Government's hand. Their impression was in fact broadly correct,⁽²⁾ but the Government was not at all grateful for their help. When E.H. Jones, the local Secretary, telegraphed the Minister of Railways, asking him whether he approved of their handling meat and jam for export on the Balmoral Castle, he was, in effect, told that they should mind their own business.⁽³⁾ Nevertheless, the Government without doubt acted in a most indecisive and ambiguous way throughout the period of mounting indignation. While it had already given an

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1. Cape Times 28th November, 1919; Minutes of the Cape Federation 27th November, 1919 (T.U.C.S.A. Papers). The date of the decision given in the Cape Times and The Cape Argus on 19th December, 1919, is wrong.
 2. Cape Times 24th December, 1919; The Cape Argus 19th December, 1919.
 3. Cape Times 22nd December, 1919.

undertaking to restrict the export of foodstuffs to those where there was a genuine surplus and it was no longer issuing permits for the export of meat and maize, which was continuing only because the permits previously issued had not yet been executed, it had failed to make clear what its policy was and there was public suspicion about how it was defining "genuine surplus".⁽¹⁾

Although the I.C.U. was not affiliated to the Cape Federation, it was clear that nothing could be done without its co-operation and that some consultation took place before or after the meeting of the Federation's Executive on 27th November. The I.W.A. was also consulted.⁽²⁾ Both unions agreed to co-operate in preventing the export of foodstuffs. This was what the strike was about. On 6th December, 1919, Clements Kadalie wrote to the Secretary of the Cape Federation,

"At the General Meeting of the above Union held last night, Friday, December 5th the following resolution was unanimously adopted.

'That this Union asserts itself to put into operation the resolution passed by the Federation of Trades as to not handling "Foodstuff" (sic) for exportation in the first instance of the next shipment and leaves the matter into the hands of the Committee to give such information to the members in the Docks.'

It was in a magnificent spirit that this resolution was adopted and the members alledged (sic) themselves to be loyal to this Union." (3)

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1. Cape Times 24th December, 1919; The Cape Argus 19th December, 1919.
 2. Cape Times 18th December, 1919.
 3. C. Kadalie to R. Stuart 6th December, 1919 (T.U.C.S.A. Papers).

Nothing was said about a demand for higher wages. Looking back in 1922, Kadalie declared that the dock strike had been

"not for wages but to save the whole country from starvation, when even the white workers were afraid to tackle the national duty." (1)

It is clear that no explicit undertaking was sought from, or given by, the white trade unions to support the I.C.U.'s wage claim,⁽²⁾ and, even though this was from the beginning coupled with the aim of ending food exports, there was considerable misunderstanding between the I.C.U. and white supporters about what the purpose of the strike was. Even Dean seems to have been somewhat hazy. When the strike was already some days old, he was saying,

"When the export of food is stopped, then will be the time to see precisely how far the strike is a protest against exportation, and how much for increases of wage." (3)

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1. Ilanga Iase Natal 27th January, 1922.
 2. In his autobiography (p.41) Kadalie says, "The Cape Federation of Labour Unions ... declared that a check on the exportation of foodstuffs to Europe was necessary ... The I.C.U. Executive readily agreed to tackle the job. We decided, however, that if a strike was to be called we should also take advantage of the situation to put in demands for a minimum wage of six shilling per day. The National Union of Railwaymen ... agreed to support our demands." When interviewed by a reporter at the beginning of the strike, Stuart "distinctly said that a strike on the question of wages alone would have been most improbable. A wages grievance certainly existed, but this was in the hands of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union." (Cape Times 19th December, 1919). There seems to be no substance in the allegation of the leader writer of The Cape Argus (20th December, 1919) that the Cape Federation made a bargain with the I.C.U. and the I.W.A., that it "held out to them the bait of still higher wages if they would refuse to handle foodstuffs for export."
 3. Cape Times 23rd December, 1919.

At the end of the strike, when accusations and recriminations were being bandied about, the railway union repudiated any suggestion that it had committed itself to backing the African and Coloured workers in the matter of wages;⁽¹⁾ and certainly for all the European trade unionists who applauded the striking dockworkers this was a subordinate issue of no great interest.⁽²⁾

The dock employers on Saturday 13th December at last announced a pay increase, the Railways and Harbours Administration making an offer of an additional shilling a day, while the private firms offered to increase their daily rate from 4s. to 6s. This conciliatory move must have originated in a desire to forestall trouble, though the Administration claimed that no representations for increased pay had been made and that its pay award was entirely ex gratia and received with gratitude.⁽³⁾ The Government's offer was repeated by the Port Goods Superintendent on the

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1. Cape Times 30th December, 1919.
 2. W.G. Ballinger thinks that the dock strike did not originate at all in the furore about foodstuff exports. "Investigation has established the fact that Kadalie was encouraged to strike by European Trade Union officials who had failed to get an advance for their members and had threatened the employers that they would embarrass them by urging the Natives to organise and demand an increase in wages." (Winifred Holtby and Africa, B/UCT).
 3. The Cape Argus 20th December, 1919; Cape Times 20th December, 1919. "It is incorrect that the men were offered 6s. per day by the Stevedoring Companies without demand. As long ago as September a request was put through for an increase of pay by the I.C.U. The companies only found out they were still considering it when it was thought a strike against handling foodstuffs for export was in the air." (J.H. Dean) (Cape Times 23rd December, 1919).

following Monday evening, at a meeting held in the Docks Location, and so far as the authorities were concerned, that was the end of the matter. But later that night another meeting was held outside the Location and a resolution was passed repeating the demand for 8s.6d. a day already put to the private employers.⁽¹⁾ Tuesday 16th December was Dingaan's Day, a public holiday. A meeting held at N'dabeni Location under the auspices of the I.C.U., the I.W.A. and the Cape Native National Congress was attended by some eight hundred people and presided over by Kraai of the I.W.A. After condemning the high cost of living and a recent increase in railway fares, it resolved on the motion of Cetyiwe of the I.W.A., to approach employers, government and private, for an increase in wages for African and Coloured workers, and also protested against the export of foodstuffs.⁽²⁾

The strike began at 11.30 in the morning of the day after the holiday, when the stevedores employed by the Union Castle Company on the East Pier, on the instruction of their unions, refused to continue loading foodstuffs on to the Norman, as well as on to the Armada Castle, assembling instead outside the dock gates. This meeting,

1. Cape Times 18th December, 1919. This must have been the meeting which Stuart of the Cape Federation attended, or even summoned.
(Cape Times 20th December, 1919).

2. Cape Times 18th December, 1919.

which was addressed by Robert Stuart, resolved to continue the strike, refuse to handle food exports and to remain firm on the 8s.6d. pay demand.⁽¹⁾ In the afternoon the stoppage spread to the South Arm, where the men failed to report for duty after lunch. While the Armada Castle was able to sail for the coast in the afternoon, though with very little cargo aboard, by then two other ships were idle, the Mongolian Prince and the Foyle.⁽²⁾ The dock authorities were at a loss. For, in their view, the "rawwKafirs" were scarcely affected by the rise in the cost of living and were not badly off. They were particularly perplexed by the loss of influence over the men by the serangs, every one of whom was a "native chief"; and they attributed the unrest to African and Coloured agitators from the town. Although the labourers of the Docks Location, who received cheap food and lodging, were to some extent insulated from the rise in the cost of living, their dependants in the drought-stricken Eastern Province were not. Those labourers residing outside, especially those living in the city, most certainly were worse off. The Port

1. Cape Times 19th December, 1919. Kadalie's account in his autobiography (p.41-42) is somewhat egotistical. "I boarded the Norman Castle (sic) and got in touch with Joe Paulsen (sic) ... I ordered him to 'down tools' as a signal to the others ... I managed to borrow a bicycle and cycled throughout the docks calling on workers to down tools and to follow me outside the dock gates ... Outside the dock gates I addressed the huge crowd, officially inaugurating what I believe to be the first organised strike of non-European labour in South Africa." But Stuart, in a private letter, wrote: "As secretary I went to the docks and called all those employed in the loading of foodstuffs for exportation to leave off work." (R. Stuart to G. Spantan 8th April, 1920, T.U.C.S.A. Papers).

2. Cape Times 18th December, 1919.

Superintendent (Girdwood), wrote the Rev. Z.R. Mahabane caustically,

"has the effrontery to suggest that 'at the outside a couple of pounds a month would cover the gross living expenses of the average raw Kafir' ... The truth of the matter is that even this 'raw Kafir' can never in these days of profiteering subsist and support his family at home and pay his ~~taxes~~ on a sum of 40s. per mensem. Mr. Girdwood's horse (if he has any) could not subsist on that amount." (1)

At eleven o'clock on the morning of the second day of the strike a thousand strikers assembled at the Parade, an open space in front of the city hall, and were addressed by Dean and Paulse of the I.C.U., who urged them to persevere, and by Jones of the N.U.R.H.S., who assured them of the support of their fellow workmen, (2) an assurance that turned out to be of little value. The eleven o'clock meeting on the Parade became a regular event, a means of demonstrating solidarity and keeping up the strikers' spirits; and an evening meeting was also held regularly at the bottom of Adderley Street, the recognised speaking place for radical orators. (3) These gatherings, always addressed by several speakers, were, with their opening and closing hymns, not unlike open-air revival meetings. There was very little violence throughout the entire dispute, and though some of the serangs complained of threats and assaults, these were

1. Cape Times 22nd December, 1919.

2. Cape Times 19th December, 1919. There is no mention of Kadalie at this meeting.

3. C. Kadalie: My Life, p.42.

isolated incidents.⁽¹⁾

On the second day the strikers were joined by 150 labourers at the railway goods yard, which meant that only perishable goods could be handled, and on the Friday by Coloured railway workers at Salt River workshops. The strikers, therefore, were made up of three groups, (i) African dock labourers employed by South African Railways and Harbours, (ii) African and Coloured stevedores employed by private firms, (iii) some general labourers employed by the Railways, both Coloured and African workers. Generally all the dock workers whatever their race and employer seem to have struck (except those in positions of responsibility) and all the African workers whatever their job (except again those in positions of responsibility). Some Coloured workers "stuck to their posts and helped the Railway Department out of an awkward fix". Those who remained at work included the serangs and sorters and some long service employees of the Railways and Harbours, together with extra casual labour taken on specially. The Administration's cartage men continued to deliver goods to the city and European workers stayed at their posts,

1. Cape Times 20th, 23rd and 24th December, 1919, and 24th February, 1921. "There was not the least bit of disorder yesterday. From what one could observe the native strikers appear to be determined in two ways - not to go to work, and to act quietly." (Cape Times 25th December, 1919).

more being brought in.⁽¹⁾ The N.U.R.H.S. did not bring out its men. It seemed willing to fight the battle of food exports only to the last drop of the I.C.U.'s blood and did little other than to urge its members not to "scab" on the strikers. A circular letter issued by E.H. Jones is worth quoting for its style as much as its content.

"It has come to my knowledge that an effort is being made by the Administration to get white labourers and others to perform the Kafir's work, and that you are being offered 5s. extra per day, and rations, to do this Kafir's work.

"The Union look upon you to acquit yourselves as men, to perform whatever duties you should perform in the course of your ordinary work, but not to take what might be paid you extra to perform the work of Kafirs." (2)

It was on the second day of the strike that Stuart of the Federation of Trades and Jones of the N.U.R.H.S. obtained an interview with H. Burton, the Minister of Railways and Harbours, in order to tell him in effect that they would call the strike off if the Government were to impose further limits upon food exports. The hour and a half exchange brought no agreement, but aroused some

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1. Cape Times 19th, 20th, 23rd and 31st December, 1919. When it was reported in the press that the cranemen, who were white, had struck work, they were quite indignant. There was some pressure exerted in N'dabeni Location upon Africans working in various businesses in the Cape Town area to stop work, and some did. (The International 2nd January, 1920).
 2. The Cape Argus 20th December, 1919. According to "one of the leading officials" of the N.U.R.H.S., the "embargo on the export of foodstuffs, as far as the Railway and Harbour Servants' Union is concerned, has been in existence a fortnight" (Cape Times 20th December, 1919), but there is not a shred of evidence to show any action by that union.

acrimony, since the labour leaders objected to government attempts to replace black labour with "scab" white labour, while Burton accused them of "injudiciously" exciting the natives and of "levelling a pistol at the head of the proper constitutional authority of the country". On the export issue, the Minister insisted that only surplus foodstuffs were being exported, that the Government normally followed the advice of the Cost of Living Commission and the Meat Investigation Commission whenever those bodies recommended export restriction and that it would be absurd and harmful to place unnecessary restrictions upon exports. Stuart and Jones tartly reminded him that there was a ship then in the harbour with a quantity of maize and maize meal on board and asked him whether their sale would not have the effect of reducing the cost of those commodities in the Cape Peninsula. Their argument that a surplus existed only because the prices were too high for working class pockets and their suggestion that the Government should stabilise the cost of living by fixing prices were both rejected. The only apparent reference to the dockworkers' demand for increased wages was Jones's assertion that it was no concern of his. "It is clear to the Minister," ran the newspaper report, "that it is not the labourers' wages that are at stake, but that the course adopted by the Federation of Trades is in the nature of what is called 'direct action' against the Administration of the country."⁽¹⁾

1. Cape Times 20th December, 1919; Minutes of the Cape Federation 18th December, 1919.

On Sunday 21st December a mass meeting was held in a Cape Town cinema. E.H. Jones moved a resolution, which was accepted by a large majority, "That this meeting of citizens of Cape Town hereby approve of the action taken in stopping the export of foodstuffs from this country until the surplus of such foodstuffs available for export is more clearly and definitely ascertained, and urge that a committee be nominated by workers and exporters to determine whether any permits for export be granted or not." Jones was totally uninterested in the dockers' wages, in fact advising the strikers to accept the pay offer already made, though he did shed some crocodile tears over the price of maize and the inability of African labourers to afford it. Robert Stuart followed, moved a resolution condemning the use of white "scab" labour and then, striking a discordant note, went on to rebuke the railway union for not taking action itself, but, instead, leaving the dirty work to the Africans. Finally he threatened to bring out "every worker in the Peninsula" if food exports did not cease.⁽¹⁾

By this time the patience of the Government was becoming exhausted. On Monday morning the General Manager of S.A.R. and H., Sir William Hoy, who had come specially to Cape Town, went into conference with the Minister and the local departmental heads. Then, in the late afternoon

1. Cape Times 22nd and 30th December, 1919.

an "indaba" was held in the docks, when, with a mixture of threat, blandishment and cajolery, the authorities sought to induce the men to go back to work. The powerful official delegation, headed by the Assistant General Manager of Railways, Cape Town, was supported by 300 troops and 100 men of the South African Police, dispersed in detachments throughout the docks. The threat, emphasised by the presence of the armed men, was of dismissal and ejection from their huts of those men who lived in the Docks Location. The Assistant General Manager, Salmon, addressed the strikers - some 600, Coloured as well as African - more, to use an appropriate cliché, in sorrow than in anger. To "our surprise", he said, "on

Wednesday last ... you left your work and, we understand, you did this because the voices of other people had influenced you - people who ... have not the same interest in you as the Government has. We have been hoping that you would see that you have been making a mistake, and we have been waiting patiently ... I come to you ... as your friend, and I am going to make a final appeal to you to return to your work ... During the war we placed implicit confidence in you, and you worked well, for which we thanked you. But now, without any good reason, you forsake your masters at the voice of somebody outside. I ask you: Is that fair? I want to appeal to you for your own sakes and in the case of those who are married and have children, for the sake of your wives and children ... For the sake of all those

who are dear to you, and for the sake of your honour and your loyalty to the country I ask you, as a friend, to come back to work to-morrow, and then we will endeavour to forget the stupid mistake which you have made ..."(1)

Mr. Salmon's eloquence was attended with as little success as speeches of that sort commonly have.(2) The strike went on. Stuart, however, was uneasy and apparently advised the strike committee to call it off because of the failure of the N.U.R.H.S. to give genuine support.(3) The

1. Cape Times 23rd December, 1919.

2. "The Railways and Harbours Administration, who were now losing heavily financially, were infuriated by the Natives' effective participation in the strike. The so-called European 'experts' on Native Affairs, officials from the Johannesburg Central Pass Office and from the Transkeian Territory, were rushed to Cape Town to advise the Natives not to be misled by the I.C.U. and the Coloured people. A meeting was arranged in the Docks Location at 5 p.m. I managed to be present, but was afterwards ejected. The meeting was a complete failure. An old Native man ... shouted to the audience in Xhosa, 'It is too late now. Let us go to Kadalie, our leader, at the bottom of Adderley Street' ..."

(C. Kadalie: My Life, p.43)

The only 'expert' at the meeting seems to have been Colonel Sir Walter Stanford, who was, according to Salmon, "perhaps the greatest friend of the natives in the whole of the Cape Province, who is loved and respected by all natives". (Cape Times 23rd December, 1919).

3. R. Stuart to P.B. Smith 30th December, 1919 (T.U.C.S.A. Papers).

position at that time with regard to the wage demand was that the Minister of Railways had promised to consider it if the men went back to work. Stuart subsequently alleged that the strike committee did agree that the most sensible thing would be to call the strike off.⁽¹⁾ If so, either it changed its mind or it was unable to convince the men.

Having failed to persuade the strikers to return to work, the Government resorted to the more drastic action that had been threatened. At the same time it manoeuvred to deprive them of their European support by giving way on the export question. On 24th December a statement by the Chairman of the Cost of Living Commission, who was also the Controller of Imports and Exports, appeared in the newspapers. It made a number of concessions.

"For some considerable time past permits have been required for the export of practically every food-stuff. The only exceptions may be said to be fresh fruit, fresh fish and jams. It is, however, intended to add jams to the list in the next issue of the 'Gazette'. Since my appointment as Controller of Exports on October 30 last, and subject to the exceptions mentioned hereafter, no export of maize, mealie meal, oats, butter, cheese, eggs, flour, wheat and rice, has been allowed, and this list has been increased by the addition of bran, bacon and meat."

The permitted exceptions to the general policy of non-export had been two very large consignments of maize meal (85,000 and 12,000 bags) already in transit or at least authorised at the time the total embargo on export was enforced. The other exceptions were trifling.⁽²⁾

1. Cape Times 30th December, 1919.

2. Cape Times 24th December, 1919.

In spite of this partial victory, the strike continued in order to achieve the wage demand. The situation in the docks a week after its beginning was that a certain amount of work was being done and some ships were getting away. Through the efforts of its crew the Union Castle's Norman, the first ship involved in the dispute, sailed a couple of days after the strike had begun. In most cases the crews took a hand at bunkering and discharging cargo, assisted by sorters and serangs. Additional white labour was taken on at the railway goods yards, where the black labourers remained on strike, and cartage to local consignees was maintained. But ships were avoiding Cape Town where possible, and truck loads of coal accumulated. When three big vessels, the Briton, Koursk and Comrie Castle, sailed on Christmas Eve, the docks were left largely deserted. The Mongolian Prince and Foyle, however, caught by the dispute at the very beginning, remained strike bound.⁽¹⁾

On Christmas Eve, which was a Wednesday, the Government, in spite of a last minute appeal by Dean and Kadalie not to use force lest it should evoke a violent reaction,⁽²⁾ paraded troops in the dock area again and evicted the residents of the Docks Location. It was rather an empty

1. Cape Times 20th, 24th, 25th and 27th December, 1919.

2. Cape Times 24th December, 1919. They exaggerated somewhat in saying that, if the Docks Location were cleared, "the wandering about of thousands of men with nowhere to go would be a danger to the people of Cape Town in many ways." There were fewer than a thousand residents.

gesture. Clearly the government would have much preferred the workers to go back to work than itself go to the trouble and expense of getting rid of them and bringing in a fresh batch, even supposing more men could have been readily obtainable. Although Salmon said that he was giving the strikers the last opportunity to return to work, another "last chance" was offered. Few (about thirty) took the offer up, and only some fifty elected to go back to their villages, which was one of the alternatives presented. The rest, the overwhelming majority, were offered accommodation in a tented camp at Milnerton on the outskirts of Cape Town and near N'dabeni Location. Again, few accepted, at least to begin with. Most of the strikers made their way into the city, where they listened to speeches - as many as a dozen on end - and spent the rest of their time waiting outside the offices of the Federation of Trades, walking the streets, or sitting on park benches. On the Parade they heard Carver of the Labour Party speaking of the famine conditions in the King William's Town district and urging them to carry on with their strike. At a later meeting Kadalie and Dean spoke, Kadalie promising that the men would not go hungry. Both of them counselled restraint, whatever the provocation.⁽¹⁾

Over the Christmas period most of the strikers from the Docks Location made their way to the temporary location

1. Cape Times 25th and 27th December, 1919; C. Kadalie: My Life, p.44.

at Milnerton and as many as a hundred went back to work on Boxing Day (Friday).⁽¹⁾ On the Saturday evening the strike committee decided to call the strike off, not because there was much danger of a substantial return to work, but rather because of the difficulty of keeping it up without the support of the white unions. Dean issued a statement blaming "1. the failure of the National Union of Railway and Harbour Servants to keep their promise to the Dockworkers to support them in the event of their deciding to strike. 2. The half-hearted support of the Federation of Trades." When the decision was communicated to a meeting in N'dabeni Location on Sunday, it encountered considerable incredulity and opposition. It also caused some ill-feeling between the I.C.U. on the one hand and the Cape N.N.C. and the I.W.A. on the other, with the Rev. Mahabane claiming that the latter were "the real leaders of the people" and J.H. Dean suggesting that Congress and the I.W.A. had perhaps gone behind the strike committee's back because "some of them had white faces". It appears that on the Saturday morning the leaders of the Cape Congress and the I.W.A. had obtained from the Mayor of Cape Town and the Assistant General Manager of the Railways and Harbours a promise to attend a joint conference of representatives of employers and employees to go into the whole question of African and Coloured wages throughout the Cape Peninsula, provided that the men went back to work. Although this

1. Cape Times 27th December, 1919: The Cape Argus 27th December, 1919.

promise was passed on to the strike committee at a meeting at the city hall on Saturday evening, the committee had surrendered unconditionally. The result was that there was no general resumption of work on Monday 29th December. But, as became clear at a further meeting held that day, opposition to ending the strike was weakening. On Tuesday 30th the men streamed back to work and the residents of the Docks Location went back to their huts.⁽¹⁾

The Cape Federation repudiated any responsibility for the failure of the strike and to blame it was, indeed, less than just. Most of the strike pay and the expenditure on the food that was distributed among the Africans of N'dabeni and the Docks Location came from donations made to the Federation by sympathetic unions and organisations, including the International Socialist League and the South African Industrial Federation,⁽²⁾ and it assumed responsibility for all liabilities.⁽³⁾ Understandably relations between the I.C.U. and the Federation were distinctly cool after the strike, and it is evident that in the ensuing months Kadalie did not grow in Stuart's esteem.⁽⁴⁾ What the

1. Cape Times 30th and 31st December, 1919, 5th and 10th January, 1920.

2. The Cape Argus 20th December, 1919; Cape Times 24th December, 1919; R. Stuart to W.H. Andrews 30th December, 1919, and to J. Richmond 20th May, 1920 (T.U.C.S.A. Papers).

3. R. Stuart to J. Richmond 20th May, 1920.

4. Acknowledging a donation for the strikers that came after every debt had been settled, Stuart wrote, "according to his actions of late I doubt whether it is desirable that the amount be paid to him." (Ibid.) Cf. also an impatient letter sent by Stuart to Kadalie on 19th February, 1920 (T.U.C.S.A. Papers) about debts incurred in the strike, which, in fact, the Federation paid off without quibble.

Federation and the I.C.U. did have in common was contempt for N.U.R.H.S. "To my mind", wrote Stuart to the Mayor of Benoni, Bob ~~Waterson~~^{Waterston},

"it is only a Union on paper and provides fat jobs for a few... when the strike was declared this so called Union made some very bold statements such as this big Union was to support the Natives both Moral and Financial, and they the natives had done the right thing and advised them to keep solid. The next thing that happened the following day, platelayers from the permanent way were driven into the docks by engine drivers members of the N.U.R.A.H.S. to scab on the native. Then the cran (sic) drivers also members of the same Union hoisted the goods handled by scab labour ... However the Strike was continued with the hope that sufficient scab labour would be unobtainable and that sufficient finances would come along, but without success, and as the issue was somewhat confused with the question of wages being introduced I held out little hope of gaining anything. But the native was solid, solidarity was exhibited in the right spirit, but for the N.U.R.A.H.S. victory was achieved.

"Now that it is over I can only ask you to accept my best thanks for the financial support you so willing (sic) sent me, (1) which came at the right time, as you understand it takes a great deal of money to meet the requirement of such a lot of men close on 1000 even if they got a small sum, and there being so many calls on the Union of late that they are all in a semi state of insolvency. If your centre can hold a little to clear up the accumulated debt I shall be glad." (2)

Jones answered all charges of betrayal by denying ever having committed himself to support the wage demand, and this was perfectly true. Although one wonders why it did not enter Jones's head that an ally - and a sought-after

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1. This must have been the £50 from Benoni (C. Kadalie: My Life, p.42; Cape Times 24th December, 1919) that Mr. Trapido, editor of the Kadalie autobiography, improbably traces to the Industrial Workers of the World (note 1, p.48-49).
 2. R. Stuart to the Mayor of Benoni 30th December, 1919 (T.U.C.S.A. Papers).

ally at that - who had fought his union's battle might have some moral claim for support in waging the rest of the campaign, the fact remains that the railwaymen, unedifying as their behaviour had been, were simply being made a scapegoat. The strike collapsed because no more money was forthcoming. Sympathy was bound to wane once the principal aim of the strike, the ending of food exports, seemed to have been achieved. Besides, the stevedores and dockworkers had been offered a pay rise before the strike began. There was something in what Jones said:

"Mr. Dean and the strike committee, not being such good generals as to know when they had won the position and having attempted to go further than they were justified, now endeavour to throw the responsibility on this Union." (1)

One feature of the dock strike that was very ominous for the future of general unions in South Africa was the deployment of soldiers and police and the expulsion of the strikers from the Docks Location, a move which the I.C.U. interpreted as intimidation.⁽²⁾ It is true that the Government happened to be directly involved as one of the employers and that it acted, for all its display of armed

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1. The Cape Argus 29th December, 1919; Cape Times 30th December, 1919.
 2. Cape Times 24th December, 1919, and 30th August, 1920. The use of troops was undoubtedly a grievance. "What the natives could not understand was that when the Europeans struck, their grievances were redressed and their wages raised. But when the natives struck they were refused amelioration and were overawed by the military." (W. Dunjwa, Cape Times 22nd July, 1921).

force, with considerable restraint. Nevertheless, it is not to be doubted that, had the strike gone on longer, the contract labourers of the Railways and Harbours Administration would have been shipped back to their homes and replacements recruited. The fact that the strikers were largely migrant workers must be given due weight. In spite of the extraordinarily favourable situation in Cape Town, the impediments to the unionisation of the unskilled remained formidable.

The strike, then, was a failure. There was little ground for satisfaction even in the matter of food exports, which, as soon as the trouble had blown over, the Government again authorised.⁽¹⁾ Yet, for all that, the 1919 strike was a demonstration of considerable power. It had lasted fourteen days and brought out over two thousand men.⁽²⁾ The prestige earned by the I.C.U. gained for it an influx of new members, bringing its strength up to two thousand by January, 1920.⁽³⁾ Four hundred members attended the annual meeting held on 16th January, 1920, which was presided over by J.H. Dean.⁽⁴⁾ Referring, in the course of his annual report, to the dock strike, Kadalie

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1. The Eastern Province Herald 21st February, 1920.
 2. Union of South Africa: Annual Report of the Factories Division 1919, p.45.
 3. C. Kadalie: The relation between white and black workers in South Africa; a brief account of the labour movement (pamphlet) (Johannesburg and London, 1927), p.4.
 4. Cape Times 21st January, 1920.

"thanked the men for the stand they had made for their rights, and also commended their good conduct during the strike, during which they refrained from any hostile or troublesome attitude towards the Government. He was convinced that the authorities now recognised that they were men and not 'boys' any longer."

The election of officers followed. Kadalie, out of a job because he had absented himself from his employment during the strike, was elected Organising Secretary at two pounds a week. Other appointments included James King as President, J.G. Gumbs as Vice-President and Joe Paulse as Treasurer, and William Fife was elected to the Executive Committee.⁽¹⁾

The ending of the dock strike did not put a stop to agitation. Kadalie spoke at a meeting organised at the beginning of February by the Democratic Labour Party to protest against the high cost of food. Dean, who presided, was cheered for his suggestion of a general strike as a possible remedy.⁽²⁾ In March a joint I.C.U. - I.W.A. meeting on the Grand Parade called upon the Government to convene a conference of the Railways and Harbours Administration with the unions.⁽³⁾ Then, in August, 1920, the I.C.U. circulated a letter among all employers of black unskilled and semi-skilled labour - South African Railways and Harbours, the Chamber of Commerce, the Manufacturers'

1. Ibid; C. Kadalie: My Life, p.44.

2. Cape Times 2nd February, 1920.

3. The meeting (in the evening) was thinly attended (only three hundred present) and presided over by T. Le Fleur, not a well-known figure. (Cape Times 25th March, 1920).

Association and individual employers - requesting the introduction of a minimum wage of 8s.4d. a day and ten days' paid holiday a year.⁽¹⁾ Although prices by then had reached their peak and begun to fall, few employees would have admitted it, and the I.C.U. was not alone in its agitation. Other unions of unskilled workers were also seeking pay rises, the South African Workmen's Co-operative Union asking the city council for a 25% increase (24th July), the Cape Town Municipal Workers' Association for one of 20% (11th August).⁽²⁾ The continued rise in prices and the widespread dissatisfaction amongst the poorly-paid workers persuaded the Government to call a conference of employers of unskilled labour, which met in early September. There was no question of negotiating with the unions, simply one of concerting policy, for which purpose a committee was set up by the conference. In its discussions, the committee conceded that Coloured workers, who were considered separately from the "kraal Natives", were entitled to more money, and it was recommended that those employed by the Railways and Harbours Administration

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1. Cape Times 8th and 30th August and 20th September, 1920. Evidently this demand did not cover dock workers, for whom a separate claim had been lodged, viz. 12s.6d. for foremen, 9s. for winchmen and gangwaymen, 8s. for labourers. (Cape Times 12th August, 1920).
 2. Cape Times 22nd September, 1920. The Cape Town Municipal Workers' Association was losing members at this time (perhaps to the I.C.U. or the South African Workmen's Co-operative Union). The 1100 membership of 1919 was down to 761 in 1920. (Union of South Africa, Office of Census and Statistics: Social Statistics No. 3 - 1921, p.53).

should receive an additional "war" bonus of 10% upon the existing rate of pay, thus giving married men 6s.2d. a day (i.e. 110% of 5s.7d., which included the shilling granted just before the strike), or 37s. a week. 38s. a week (the extra shilling in lieu of the fringe benefits enjoyed by employees of the S.A.R. and H.) was recommended for those employed by the members of the Manufacturers' Association (an increase of 6s. a week on the existing minimum wage), while for the building trade the committee accepted a minimum of 39s. on account of the intermittent nature of the work. Cape Town municipality was already paying its men a minimum of 40s. a week, but the committee accepted that as reasonable, "since a large proportion of their employees were engaged in connection with stercus removal, abattoir work and similar employment of a peculiarly repugnant nature. Offensive features of this kind are a fair argument for special consideration." The committee agreed, too, to the 8s. a day which the stevedoring companies were prepared to pay, because their casual labourers did work "of a semi-skilled nature, which demands aptitude and experience. The average of earning opportunity may be only three to four days per week."

Having dealt with Coloured unskilled labour, the committee turned to consider African labour.

"Assuming the correctness of the data showing that the kraal Native at the Docks is to-day enjoying an increased earning capacity of 55% over pre-war conditions, that his cost of housing remains unchanged and that his cost of sustenance has probably increased by 50% to 60% the committee sees no reasonable justification for recommending any

"increase of pay."(1)

However it was agreed that Africans unable to obtain accommodation in a location or compound and compelled to live in town should receive a housing allowance of four-pence a working day.(2)

Of all the employers, the shipping and stevedoring firms responded quickly to the demand for higher wages, receiving an I.C.U. delegation made up of C. Kadalie, J.G. Gumbs and S.M. Bennett Ncwana and shortly afterwards making their offer.(3) The administrative machinery of

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1. The earning capacity of married men had increased by 55%. Before the war a labourer could earn 22s. a week (Saturday counting as half a day) at 4s. a day, in 1920 33s.6d. a week (Saturday counting as a full day) at 5s.7d. a day. An increase of only 50%-60% in "cost of sustenance", if true in the case of the men themselves, was improbable in the case of dependents in the tribal lands.
 2. Cape Archives: Agendas, Reports and Resumes Book, City of Cape Town, Conclusions of Committee (set up by employers of unskilled labourers), Volume II, Parcel 88, Item 163, 1920.
 3. Cape Times 30th August, 1920; C. Kadalie: My Life, p.45. According to Kadalie Ncwana was a student at Zonnebloem College and, chancing to be visiting the I.C.U. office, was taken along. Kadalie must be wrong, since Ncwana had served with the army in Flanders and apparently had a criminal past: "... alleged to have been convicted of theft in Johannesburg and sentenced to 5 years' I.H.L. Furthermore it is believed he was connected with the Native trouble in Johannesburg." (Central Archives: Department of Justice 3/1064/18, Commissioner, South African Police to Secretary for Justice 30th November, 1920). Ncwana was the editor of a new newspaper, The Black Man. (Central Archives: Loc.cit., Commissioner, S.A.P. to Secretary for Justice 27th August, 1920).

the other employers worked rather more slowly,⁽¹⁾ and an impatient I.C.U. sent off a reminder in the third week of September. At a well-attended meeting on 17th September the Secretary complained of the dilatoriness of the employers, the vagueness of the offer made by some to increase wages or to make "adjustments", and the failure of all employers, even the shipping and stevedoring companies, to recognise the Union.⁽²⁾ There was some talk of a general strike, including a sympathetic dock strike,⁽³⁾ but nothing came of it.

"The I.C.U.," wrote Kadalie in 1928, "under the writer's leadership, scored a great victory at Cape Town Docks, when the wages of Non-European workers was (sic) raised from 4/- to 8/- per day."⁽⁴⁾ This famous victory was a wretched

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1. The Chamber of Commerce does not appear to have participated in the employers' conference. Its management committee met later in September to consider the I.C.U. demand and recommended members to make their own arrangements. (Cape Times 21st September, 1920).
 2. Cape Times 20th September, 1920. Kadalie said: "Our men think that, as the I.C.U. has been officially recognised by the Minister of Mines and Industries, other associations and individual employers should also grant it recognition." This official recognition was no more than the inclusion of the I.C.U. among "Trade Unions and other Associations of Employees in the Union, 1912 to 1920", listed by the Ministry of Mines and Industries in 1920 and published by the Office of Census and Statistics in 1921. (Union of South Africa: Social Statistics No. 3 - 1921, p.53). The I.W.A. and the S.A. Workmen's Co-operative Union were not listed, but the Industrial Workers' Union was.
 3. Cape Times 20th and 22nd September and 4th October, 1920.
 4. Manifesto of 9th July, 1928 (B/UCT).

fourpence a day extra for rack-rented Africans in Cape Town and nothing at all for those living at N'dabeni or in the Docks Location, and these were the men who had made up the bulk of the strikers. While it is true that men working for the private firms received a substantial increase of 2s. a day (a 33% rise), bringing the daily rate from 6s. (not 4s.) to 8s., if they were working only three or four days a week with little prospect of overtime, the extent of the improvement is less striking than the inadequacy of their existing wages. The stevedores' wages fell below the 38s. a week that the committee of September, 1920, evidently considered to be an acceptable minimum wage. Therefore, it was not such a great victory really. The concessions, such as they were, had been bestowed from above, not extorted from below.

By the middle of 1920 Kadalie had attracted the suspicions of the police as a dangerous agitator under the influence of what was then habitually called Bolshevism.⁽¹⁾

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1. A police report of June, 1920, connected the I.C.U. with the International Socialist League and suggested that two members of the I.S.L. (A.Z. Berman and M. Walt) belonged to it. Since, however, the International Socialist League, a Johannesburg organisation, was confused with the Industrial Socialist League, a Cape Town group, the report must be treated with some reserve. (Central Archives: Department of Justice 3/1064/18, Commissioner, South African Police to the Secretary for Justice 14th June, 1920).

In October the Commissioner of Police suggested to the Chief Immigration Officer in Pretoria that his residence status should be investigated with a view to his deportation, on the ground that he was "engaged with certain European agitators spreading pernicious doctrines amongst the coloured persons of the Cape Province",⁽¹⁾ and the outcome was that on 2nd November a deeming order was issued by the Minister of the Interior declaring him a prohibited immigrant under Section 4 (1) (a) and (d) of the Immigration Act of 1913.⁽²⁾ On receipt of the order, which for some obscure reason was not served until 24th November, Kadalie appealed to the Immigration Appeal Board, and he was given a temporary permit on payment of £35 plus £15 to cover the costs of the appeal. Help was solicited from the Democratic Labour Party and on 27th November four members of the Party, including Rayner and Dean, at an interview with the Principal Immigration Officer in Cape Town "threatened trouble".⁽³⁾ An approach was also made to the Cape Federation of Labour Unions⁽⁴⁾ and

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1. Central Archives: Department of the Interior 1/A/1787 Commissioner of Police to Chief Immigration Officer 1st October, 1920; Union of South Africa: Debates of the House of Assembly, 1920, Col.6290. The Commissioner of Police supposed that Kadalie came from Zanzibar, but the Principal Immigration Officer in Cape Town got more accurate information from the Cape Town C.I.D. (Central Archives: Department of the Interior 1/A/1787 Principal Immigration Officer, Cape Town to Secretary for the Interior 25th October, 1920). It seems likely that Robert Kadalie furnished information. (C. Kadalie: My Life, p.46).
 2. "Clements Kadalie is deemed by the Minister ... to be unsuited to the requirements of the Union on economic grounds and/or on account of standards or habits of life, and to be an undesirable inhabitant of, or visitor to, the Union on account of information received through official channels." (Central Archives: Department of the Interior 1/A/1787).
 3. Central Archives: Department of the Interior 2/A/1787 Telegram Principal Immigration Officer, Cape Town, to Secretary for the Interior 27th November, 1920.
 4. Minutes of the Cape Federation 10th December, 1920. Kadalie also mentions (My Life, p.47) the Church of Scotland, implying that this had some influence with Patrick Duncan, the Minister of the Interior. The flaw in the story is that the Minister at that time was not Duncan but Sir Thomas Watt.

Dr. Abdurahman, who later claimed credit for Kadalie's escape from deportation.⁽¹⁾

Kadalie's case came up before the Board on 2nd December and he was represented by Advocate Stuart, M.L.A. who, having great difficulty in constructing a defence because there was little to go on other than the Minister's deeming order, argued that the order was ultra vires on the ground of vagueness and ambiguity. The submission of the Principal Immigration Officer was that the appellant had no right to see the documents in the case and that the Board could not go behind the Minister's deeming order. In a muddled judgment the Board, unsure whether or not the Minister's order was final - and unwilling to believe that it was - and unsure whether Kadalie was an alien and therefore not entitled to appeal to the Supreme Court - and unwilling not to let him have the benefit of the doubt - finally agreed to an appeal. Kadalie seems to have been very lucky. As the Chairman of the Board said: "We have seen the previous cases which have come before the Board for the past two years and in all these cases the Board has decided that as far as the Board is concerned the deeming order is final."⁽²⁾ Presumably, if the appeal to the Supreme Court had not been allowed, Kadalie would have been deported, since there is no sign that up to that time the Government was going to give way to pressure. The granting of the appeal gave it time to reconsider its decision. Before the appeal came up the Department of the Interior, on 17th December, instructed the Principal Immigration Officer to stay the proceedings⁽³⁾ and then on 18th January, 1921, the Minister

1. Cape Times 13th June, 1924.

2. Central Archives: Department of the Interior A/1787 Proceedings of Appeal Board 2nd December, 1920.

3. Central Archives: Department of the Interior 3/A/1787.

agreed to let Kadalie stay unconditionally.⁽¹⁾

Grandiloquently Kadalie wrote in his autobiography, "If the story of the contemplated deportation could be written in full, it would rank as one of the most interesting episodes in the annals of South African history ... In these pages it is impossible and inappropriate to disclose the secret drama that was responsible for the cancellation of the deportation order.⁽²⁾ The explanation for the Government's change of heart does not seem to be so dramatic or mysterious as this suggests. Although it is conceivable that there was a specific understanding made by Kadalie to give support to the South African Party in the coming election (and certainly the I.C.U. did so⁽³⁾), there is no need to suppose that there was such a formal arrangement, since the volte-face is sufficiently explained by the narrowness of the Government's majority after the 1920 election and its willingness to make a gesture likely to gain it popularity with the Coloured and African electorate. At this very time the Government was far from popular on account of the Port Elizabeth disturbances of October, when twenty-three African and Coloured rioters

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1. Central Archives: Department of the Interior 5/A/1787 Under Secretary for the Interior to the Principal Immigration Officer, Cape Town 19th January, 1921. It is of some interest that the Governor of Nyasaland inquired about Kadalie's proposed deportation, which he had heard of through newspaper reports. He did not, however, make any comment upon it. (Central Archives: Department of the Interior 8/A/1787 Governor of Nyasaland to Governor-General of South Africa 30th December, 1920).
 2. C. Kadalie: My Life, p.47.
 3. Cape Times 17th February, 1921.

had been shot dead by the police. Doubtless the Government had no wish to increase its unpopularity and it is, therefore, surprising that the deportation of Kadalie was even contemplated. It can only be supposed that the proceedings against him, begun some weeks before the Port Elizabeth hullabaloo, had a momentum of their own, and also that the Government was taken aback by the extent of the influential support the I.C.U. Secretary received. What is beyond doubt is that his solicitors, Dichmont and Dichmont, used the impending election to bring pressure to bear on the Government.

" ... we were to-day interviewed by a deputation from the local native labour union, which body desires us to endeavour to obtain some definite decision by 8 p.m. to-morrow (Tuesday). It appears that a meeting of all members of such labour union (sic) is being held to-morrow at that hour, and the momentous question to whether (sic) the natives' support should be given to the enlarged South African party will be put to the meeting. Judging from the tone of the members it would appear that your decision in regard to Kadalie will have a great bearing on the decision arrived at ..."(1)

The second annual general meeting of the I.C.U. met in an atmosphere of considerable and justifiable confidence and optimism. For three daughter branches had been founded - at Luderitzbucht (South West Africa), Simonstown⁽²⁾ and

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1. Union of South Africa: Debates 1925, Col. 6292, Dichmont and Dichmont to the Minister of the Interior 10th January, 1921. The enlarged S.A.P. was the amalgamation of the old S.A.P. with the Unionists. Cf. also Debates 1926, Col. 296-297.
 2. The Simonstown branch was composed (at least partly) of Admiralty employees, apparently African and therefore, perhaps, not acceptable to the I.W.U. (Cape Times 30th August, 1920).

Langebaan; members were counted by the thousand;⁽¹⁾ and the financial standing of the Union (it was claimed) had improved.⁽²⁾ J.H. Dean was not, as far as it is known, present at this meeting,⁽³⁾ though, in the previous November, he had been active with other members of the Democratic Labour Party in Kadalie's cause at the time of his threatened deportation and was still at that time being described as one of the I.C.U.'s organisers.⁽⁴⁾ It is evident that about the beginning of 1921 a breach appeared between the I.C.U. and the Democratic Labour Party. Early in February William Fife, because he was supporting the S.A.P., declined to act as chairman at one of Albert Batty's election meetings and later that month he launched a strong attack upon the former allies of the I.C.U., contemptuously dismissing their assistance in saving Kadalie from deportation.⁽⁵⁾ Abandoning the I.C.U.

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1. 4,000 according to Social Statistics No. 3 of 1921. In August, 1920, Kadalie had declared that there were "active branches all over the Peninsula" (one exclusively for "natives engaged in stores") with a membership of 14,000. (Cape Times 30th August, 1920). Fourteen thousand is obviously wrong, possibly a typographical error. In September he was claiming a total membership of between five and six thousand. (Cape Times 20th September, 1920).
 2. Cape Times 15th January, 1921.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Union of South Africa: Debates 1925, Col. 6291. The Eastern Province Herald 29th November, 1920. Neither Dean nor any other member of the Democratic Labour Party was included among the six Europeans said by the police to belong to the I.C.U. in June, 1920. Dean was said to be a member of the Marxist Social Democratic Federation. (Central Archives: Department of Justice 3/1064/18, Commissioner, S.A.P. to Secretary for Justice 14th June, 1920).
 5. Cape Times 17th February, 1921. "It was not any individual who stopped the proceedings against Kadalie, but the combined efforts of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union and the A.P.O."

Dean became Chairman (and Rayner Vice-Chairman) of the local branch of the Workers' Union, a British general union that had extended its operations to South Africa.⁽¹⁾ The South African organiser of this, Dave Kendall, had, in August, 1920, persuaded the Simonstown branch of the Industrial Workers' Union to affiliate to his organisation,⁽²⁾ and other poaching activities of his occasioned some indignation in the Cape Federation.⁽³⁾ It appears that, in 1921, he was even trying to win over the I.C.U.⁽⁴⁾

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1. Minutes of the Cape Federation of Labour Unions 25th September, 1920 (T.U.C.S.A. Papers). The Workers' Union had been organised by Tom Mann among the less skilled engineering workers in Britain at the end of the 19th century. (H.A. Clegg, A. Fox and A.F. Thompson: A History of British Trade Unions since 1889, Volume I, 1889-1910, Oxford, 1964, p.87). Rayner returned to England, where he met Kadalie in 1927 at the time of the latter's mission to Europe. (C. Kadalie: My Life: p.128, where he speaks of "an aged Englishman who ... attended the first meeting in Cape Town at which the I.C.U. was inaugurated" and gives his initial as E. instead of F.).
 2. Cape Times 14th August, 1920, which gives Kendall's as G.H.; Minutes of the Cape Federation 17th August, 1920.
 3. "I have told you and openly told you that I am at all times willing to work with you. I do detest anyone going behind my back and you are the one I least expected it from." (R. Stuart to D. Kendall, 2nd June, 1921, Cape Federation Letter Book, T.U.C.S.A. Papers). The Workers' Union had a membership of 1017 in 1920, with branches in Cape Town, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Simonstown, Stellenbosch, Durban and Modderfontein. (Union of South Africa, Office of Census and Statistics: Social Statistics No. 3 - 1921, p.56).
 4. "You made a statement at your Executive meeting on Saturday, the 21st May, to the effect that you ... had hoped of getting the I.C.W. (sic). I might state that you have no hope whatever of getting the natives to join you." (R. Stuart to D. Kendall 2nd June, 1921).

This, however, seemed to have a bright future all by itself. At the meeting of January, 1921, its President, J.G. Gumbs, was looking forward to a membership of tens of thousands by the next annual meeting, a hope that, in the event, did not prove so absurd.

University of Cape Town

CHAPTER II

The Attempt to Form a National Union and the Port Elizabeth Disturbances, 1919-1921.

"At our first labour Conference held at Bloemfontein in July 1920 we had the 'One Big Union Movement' in view, but, owing to our being young at the game, blinded with that spirit of sectionalism and tribalism we were unable to launch out the gigantic task before us. It was no less discouragement to the determined ones, however, it was only a temporal (sic) setback."

(Clements Kadalie, September, 1923).

While it is true that Cape Town, because of its more liberal atmosphere and the greater sophistication of its Coloured labour force, was especially favourable to the growth of an African and Coloured labour movement, labour unrest and the striving to give organisational expression to inchoate protest were to be found in towns big and small the length and breadth of the country. One of the striking features of the incipient black labour movement was the awareness in every locality of events elsewhere, and the sense of solidarity that followed upon this awareness. Leaders were for ever on the move, making contacts and spreading propaganda. Early in its history the I.C.U. got caught up in a movement to bring together the various African and Coloured workers' organisations that had sprung up in different centres as a result of post-war restlessness and the soaring cost of living. The origins of this movement can be traced to an exchange of letters in March, 1919 between Clements Kadalie and a labour leader in Bloemfontein, H. Selby Msimang. The latter, who in these early days eclipsed Kadalie in prestige and influence, was born at Edenvale, just outside Pietermaritzburg, Natal, in 1886 and educated at Healdtown. His background was significantly different from that of Kadalie. He was the son of a minister of region, the Rev. Joel Msimang, and the brother of the solicitor R.W. Msimang, the architect of the constitution of the South African Native National Congress, of which Selby himself was a member of long standing. In short, he belonged to that able and moderate African elite, committed to Christianity and imbued with the ideals of western

social democracy, that emerged before the First World War. His English was excellent and he was able to meet Europeans on equal intellectual terms, endowed as he was with the savoir-faire that enabled him to avoid the extremes of bluster and servility with a skill which failed so many I.C.U. leaders, including even Kadalie. Having worked successively as a court interpreter and a clerk in the Volksrust office of the African lawyer, Dr. P. Ka I. Seme, he was, at the time of his alliance with Kadalie, the editor of a vernacular newspaper in Bloemfontein, Morumioa-Inxusa (The Messenger).⁽¹⁾ Although his background was far from industrial, he was drawn into the labour movement because, as a leader of African opinion, he grasped the fact that the essential African grievance in the post-war years was economic, a lesson which eluded the National Congress of the Orange Free State, a body without vigour or influence.⁽²⁾ While living conditions at the location,

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1. Interview with Mr. Msimang 29th June, 1971; T.D. Mweliso: The African Yearly Register, Being an Illustrated National Biographical Dictionary (Who's Who) of Black Folks in Africa (Johannesburg, n.d.). After Dr. Seme had closed his Volksrust office, he worked as a clerk for an Indian, J.J. Moosa, in Natal. (J.J. Moosa to W.G. Ballinger 9th November, 1928, B/Wits.). This would have been from about 1913 to 1915, when he went to Bloemfontein.
 2. Even in Bloemfontein itself Congress had little following. "The Bloemfontein branch report was again very unsatisfactory. It was stated that the strong warnings given last year to this branch had been deliberately disregarded, and the Congress by a unanimous vote declared the branch defunct." (Report on the Tenth Annual Congress of the National Congress of the Orange Free State in The Friend 22nd July, 1920). In 1919 only £25.10s. had been collected by the organisation from its thirty-five branches.

Waaiohoek, where the residents had the rare privilege of being permitted to build their own houses (though not to own land), were not a source of discontent, wages had failed to respond to changes in the cost of living, and the labour force had a temporary bargaining power in a fortuitous shortage of labour, largely the result of the influenza epidemic.⁽¹⁾

As early as February, 1919, Msimang was voicing the demand for a daily wage for unskilled workers of 4s.6d., a modest enough sum, scarcely more than what was paid to Cape Town dock workers before the war, but even so, far in excess of current wage rates. The index of retail prices of food in Bloemfontein in 1919 was not much lower than that of Cape Town.⁽²⁾ On 15th February local employers of unskilled labour, including South African Railways, the Public Works Department and Bloemfontein Corporation, agreed at a meeting to recommend a minimum local wage of 2s.3d. a day, rising to 2s.9d. a day after eighteen months service, with additional increments for those engaged in semi-skilled work or work of special responsibility, a recommendation which suggests that existing wage rates were even lower.⁽³⁾ This offer was quite unacceptable and, since Msimang continued his campaign, the employers

1. The Friend 28th February, 1919

2. Cape Town 1520, Bloemfontein 1505 (Union of South Africa: Official Year Book No. 5, 1922, p.327).

3. Cape Times 18th February, 1919. Two shillings a day according to Mr. Msimang's later recollection. (Contact 30th July, 1960).

thought it expedient to re-consider their offer. At the end of the month representatives of the Council, the Master Builders' Association and the local commercial firms met again and, in spite of some grumbling, they agreed (with the exception of the Railways) to raise their offer to 2s.6d. a day, rising to 2s.9d. after twelve months service. Even with Saturday counted as a full day, this still gave only 15s. a week, although even the most grudging estimate of the cost of living for a family of five was £1.0s.0d. (compared with Msimang's of £1.9s.5d.).⁽¹⁾ The discrepancy between the acknowledged cost of living and the purchasing power of existing wages did not shake the conviction of the authorities that the clamour from the location originated in the agitation of Selby Msimang;⁽²⁾ and so they had him arrested on 28th February for incitement to public violence, which had the not surprising effect of bringing on this very violence. A mob of several hundreds smashed the windows of the houses belonging to the most unpopular 'blockmen', residents appointed by the municipality to minor posts of

1. The Friend 28th February, 1919.

2. Even before the wage question was raised Msimang had earned the displeasure of the municipal authorities by revealing that the location 'blockmen' (vide infra) were paid by the City Council (and therefore responsible to it and not to the residents) and by protesting against the imposition of lodgers' fees to cover the deficit in the location budget, a protest which had led to the withdrawal of these charges. (Interview with Mr. Msimang 29th June, 1971).

responsibility in the location, gathered outside the police station to demand the prisoner's release and stoned the police, who, displaying commendable self-control, responded by firing over the heads of the crowd, which was sufficiently alarmed to scatter.⁽¹⁾

Msimang was brought up for preliminary examination on Monday 3rd March. Flimsy enough was the evidence against him, nothing more than the use of such extravagant phrases as "Be ready for anything", "Be prepared for the dark day which is marked on our calendar", and "Hold yourselves in readiness to drink from the bitter cup together". Moreover, the police witnesses were unable to provide much to substantiate the charge, since very little disturbance had attended the speeches that had been made over the course of the preceding month. Nevertheless, the Resident Magistrate held that a prima facie^{case}/existed and he exacted an onerous £500 bail.⁽²⁾

Later that week the Mayor and the Resident Magistrate went out to the location to address the people and did so with conspicuous tactlessness. The speech of welcome, delivered by one of the moderates, must have been something of an embarrassment to the two officials, because, for all its obsequiousness, it made it clear that the grievance

1. The Friend 3rd March, 1919.

2. The Friend 4th March, 1919. The South African Labour Party raised £150, the rest coming from bonds on houses. (Interview with Mr. Msimang 29th June, 1971).

over wages was by no means new, that the demand for higher wages was wholly spontaneous, not the result of agitation by strangers, and that 4s.6d. a day was not "absurdly high", a reference to a leading article in the Bloemfontein newspaper;⁽¹⁾ and it suggested that the authorities should consult the location leaders beforehand whenever they intended to take any drastic action. The faux pas of the Magistrate was to suggest that his listeners knew "very well that every man, be he white or black, obtains justice in the courts of this country", when it was a well known fact (which the Resident Magistrate himself had illustrated) among Africans that the scales of justice tended to be tilted against the black man.⁽²⁾ The brick dropped by the Mayor created considerable resentment. "The object", he said, "of the location ... was to supply labour and to carry out the industrial concerns of the town. It had been said that the wages which natives received were not sufficient to keep the wives and families of the natives, but he could say that they expected the women to work just as much as the men." This extraordinary meeting ended with the appearance on the platform of Msimang, who called for a rendition of the National Anthem, after which he was carried away shoulder high.⁽³⁾

1. The Friend 3rd March, 1919.

2. Cf. the Minutes of the Johannesburg Joint Council of Europeans and Natives 2nd August, 1923: The Secretary said that he "had now received a letter from a Government Official in Natal making severe strictures upon the way in which magistrates differentiate in their treatment of Europeans and Natives. 'The fines and sentences of Natives are out of all proportion to their wages and education. This fact is notorious.'"

3. The Friend 7th March, 1919.

Msimang came up for trial in May, 1919, accused of inciting the "native labourers and residents of Bloemfontein ... by force and violence to demand and obtain an increase in their wages from their European employers". The indictment was quashed on the ground, in effect, that it was too vague. In the words of the judgment: " ... the whole charge is left too much at large; and that if one condenses it, it amounts merely to this, that a certain address was given, in the course of which certain persons were urged to demand certain wages, and that they were urged to demand it (sic) in a particular way, namely, by violence. On looking more closely into it, we do not find the kind or class, or act of violence indicated, on the one hand; nor have we specific words quoted from the address from which the accused could sufficiently understand what was precisely the charge brought against him."⁽¹⁾

While awaiting trial Msimang had continued to hold public meetings, though studiously maintaining a moderate tone and evading demands from the more impetuous for a strike.⁽²⁾ At the beginning of April, 1919, he moved a resolution of sympathy for the people in Johannesburg then engaged in a campaign against passes and for higher wages. Sympathy was expressed similarly for the workers at Harrismith in the

1. The South African Law Reports (1919) Orange Free State Provincial Division (1919 O.P.D.): Rex v. Msimang, p.38-44.

2. Interview with Mr. Msimang, 29th June, 1971.

Orange Free State,⁽¹⁾ where a demand for higher wages had been met by a display of force from the authorities. The claim he continued to press for a further improvement in wages evidently had an effect. For, as early as March, some employers were paying 4s.6d. a day,⁽²⁾ and, as late as the end of 1921, by which time prices and wages were showing a downward trend, unskilled wages were substantially higher than 15s. a week (the offer of February, 1919), even in the building industry, where lower wages habitually prevailed.⁽³⁾

Msimang's arrest in February, 1919, attracted much attention. The Cape Congress, meeting at N'dabeni, protested against it as "an attempt on the part of the European community of Bloemfontein to intimidate and terrorise the native community against agitation for increased wages."⁽⁴⁾ Kadali

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1. Cape Times 7th April, 1919. A comment of the newspaper's correspondent is of some interest in showing how groundless suspicion could spring from credulity: "I have telegraphed the resolution fully because on its face it bears the impress of work other than any of which the local native leaders are capable. The language and composition, if not those of a European, are inspired from some other source than the local natives ..."
 2. The Friend 7th March, 1919.
 3. Union of South Africa: Op.cit., p.305. Average weekly rates of wage paid to Coloured and Native male unskilled workers ... Engineering 22s.6d., Building 18s.9d., Manufacturing 20s.5d., Trading 22s.1d., Municipal Service 20s.4d. Mr. Msimang told me that he was able to obtain the 4s.6d. minimum by a series of negotiations with individual employers. (Interview, 29th June, 1971).
 4. The Friend 12th March, 1919.

was prompted to send a telegram of support. From Bloemfontein came the reply: "I thank you for your kind message of sympathy which gives me encouragement. I have begun to organise but I am working single-handed and would be glad if you could send me your constitution and again to send an Organiser from Cape Town to help me."⁽¹⁾ A copy of the Constitution was sent and Msimang, proceeding with the establishment of a general union known as the Native and Coloured Workers' Association, not only adopted this, but also intimated his wish to amalgamate with the I.C.U. In August he visited Cape Town at Kadalie's invitation and on the 9th, when he gave a talk in the City Hall on the organisation of labour, he was introduced, so Kadalie later said, as "an organiser of the I.C.U. in the Free State".⁽²⁾ The speech Msimang delivered on that occasion was permeated with the moderation that was characteristic of him: Europeans had nothing to fear from the other racial groups unless they persisted in driving them to desperation through the discriminatory legislation that, in the Orange Free State, had reduced Africans to a state of semi-slavery and compelled them to organise.⁽³⁾ But more important than this public

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1. Ilanga lase Natal 20th January, 1922. This is Kadalie's version of events, but the quotation must be authentic for stylistic reasons and because its publication was followed by no protest, at least in the columns of Ilanga.
 2. Ibid; Interview with Mr. Msimang 29th June, 1971.
 3. Cape Times 8th and 9th August, 1919. The meeting was presided over by I.J. Fraetas and it was A.F. Batty that moved the vote of thanks. Kadalie was not mentioned in the newspaper report. Canon Lavis, subsequently suffragan bishop, a champion of Coloured rights, was scheduled to be present, but the report does not say he actually attended.

meeting for the history of the I.C.U. were the negotiations that went on during Msimang's stay in Cape Town to confirm the alliance with Kadalie and to effect an amalgamation with other African and Coloured industrial organisations, notably the Industrial Workers of Africa. There seems little doubt that Bloemfontein and Cape Town joined forces under the name of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of South Africa.⁽¹⁾ In the case of the I.W.A. amalgamation was not easy because of its marked differences from the I.C.U. Though it appears that Msimang was able to allay the racial suspicions of the I.W.A. leaders and that "a basis for the amalgamation of the two Unions was arrived at",⁽²⁾ the I.W.A. in fact maintained a separate existence. Returning to Bloemfontein, Msimang threw himself into the task of organising the Orange Free State, and at the annual meeting of the I.C.U. in January, 1920 (which Msimang did not attend), Kadalie reported a membership of over a thousand in Bloemfontein alone and the opening of other branches in the Free State.⁽³⁾

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1. In March, 1920, Msimang submitted to a Committee enquiring into the pass laws evidence on behalf of "the Free State Division of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of South Africa", claiming a Free State membership of 7,000. (Cape Times 8th March, 1920).
 2. Cape Times 9th October, 1919.
 3. He also reported branches in Natal, but there is no confirmation elsewhere of their existence. (Cape Times 21st January, 1920). It is clear that Msimang did not tap new support so much as divert support away from Congress. It was a common complaint at the Tenth Annual Congress of the Native Congress of the Orange Free State in July, 1920, that the I.C.U. had grown at the expense of Congress. (The Friend 22nd July, 1920). A good many of its leaders were also in the I.C.U. and in the Orange Free State the Union was regarded as the offspring of Congress. (The Friend 14th and 22nd July, 1920).

The decisive event in the unification movement was a conference held in Bloemfontein in July, 1920,⁽¹⁾ which had a much more ambitious aim than just a consolidation of the alliance between Kadalie and Msimang. The intention was to unite all black labour organisations and therefore the meeting had an historical importance as the first black labour conference in South Africa. It is necessary to look at the development of the labour movement in those towns - other than Cape Town and Bloemfontein, which have already been discussed - that sent delegates to Bloemfontein and to seek an explanation for the absence of representatives from those towns that might have been expected to send them. Styled "the first annual general meeting of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of South Africa",⁽²⁾ the conference seems to have originated in a suggestion made by Selby Msimang, whose choice of venue was deliberate, his aim being to demonstrate African solidarity in an Afrikaner stronghold, or, in Kadalie's words, to "crush the Dutch spirit".⁽³⁾ The suggestion was then taken up by the South African Native National Congress, which apparently invited African labour leaders to its annual conference of 1920,⁽⁴⁾

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1. Needless to say the authorities suspected that the International Socialists were behind it. "... though at present no definite connection can be established between the International Socialists and this influential native organisation (sic) - it is known that one of the native leaders, Selby Msimang, a highly educated native, supported by a strong native following, is imbued with advanced socialist principles, which he has imbibed from white agitators, with whom he is in close touch." (Central Archives: Department of Justice 3/1064/18, Commissioner, South African Police to Secretary for Justice 27th August, 1920).
 2. The Friend 7th January, 1920.
 3. Ilanga lase Natal 20th January, 1922.
 4. The Queenstown Daily Representative and Free Press 27th May, 1920, which says that the delegates included "leaders of the labour movement among the Bantu people."

held that year at Queenstown in May immediately after the conference of the Cape Congress. The S.A.N.N.C. devoted part of its deliberations to labour questions. Kraai of the Industrial Workers of Africa attended and he and Mabaso of the Transvaal National Congress moved that a demand be made to employers throughout the country for a minimum wage of ten shillings a day and that, in the event of a refusal, a general strike be called for 31st July. While it is not clear whether this resolution, which met with considerable opposition, especially from the Cape delegates, was passed, the S.A.N.N.C. did give its blessing to the projected labour conference and resolved to send representatives of its own.⁽¹⁾

The bodies that sent delegates to Bloemfontein were the Cape Town I.C.U.; Msimang's organisation; the Native and Coloured Workers' Union of East London, Port Elizabeth and Aliwal North; and the Industrial Workers of Africa,⁽²⁾

1. The Queenstown Daily Representative and Free Press 29th May, 1920; Central Archives: Department of Justice 3/127/20 Inspector P.J. Whitaker, S.A.P. Queenstown to Deputy Commissioner, Grahamstown 2nd June, 1920.

2. The Friend 7th July, 1920; The Eastern Province Herald 7th July, 1920; Cape Times 7th July, 1920.

apparently the Cape Town branch, not that of Johannesburg.⁽¹⁾ None of the provincial Congresses was reported to have sent an official delegation, in spite of the Queenstown resolution in favour of participation. Although many - probably most - of the delegates were members of Congress, they appear, with possible rare exceptions, to have been at the Conference as representatives of labour organisations rather than of any provincial Congress or of the National Congress. More striking, however, than the apparent aloofness of Congress was the total absence of delegates from Natal and the almost total absence of delegates from the Transvaal. The only person from the latter province was, so it seems, Mrs. Charlotte Maxeke, who was there on behalf of the Bantu Women's National League of South Africa.⁽²⁾

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1. Reuter's report that appeared in the press on 7th July is ambiguous: "There will be present delegates from the Industrial Workers of Africa ... two Unions from Capetown." It is difficult to see what the two Cape Town unions could have been except the I.C.U. and the I.W.A. The Johannesburg I.W.A. may still have been alive. In May, 1919, it was applying (almost certainly unsuccessfully) for representation at a labour conference organised by the South African Industrial Federation at Bloemfontein (Cape Times 5th May, 1919) and according to a police report it was still in existence in the middle of 1920 (Central Archives: Department of Justice 3/1064/18 Commissioner, S.A.P. to Secretary for Justice 14th June, 1920). Other evidence, discussed later, suggests, however, that the I.W.A. in Johannesburg was defunct long before July, 1920.
 2. Mrs. Maxeke probably attended the Queenstown Conference. The Bantu Women's League was represented there. (The Queenstown Representative 27th May, 1920).

That Bloemfontein, Cape Town and Port Elizabeth should participate in the Bloemfontein Conference and that Johannesburg and Durban should not is surprising. It is particularly unexpected in the case of Johannesburg, which had seen a great deal of industrial and political unrest in the last year or so of the war and during the post-war period, an unrest born, as elsewhere, of the rising cost of living and lagging wages. There was discontent among the mine workers, insulated as they were from the rise in the cost of living by the provision of food and lodging, and this discontent found expression as early as February, 1919, in a brief boycott of mine stores on the East Rand. Outside the compounds of the mines the hardships of the urban Africans were exacerbated by the appalling living conditions, worse apparently than those of Cape Town. As in the case of Cape Town it had been the outbreak of the plague that had compelled the authorities to make proper provision for the accommodation of Africans. Between 1905 and 1907 the municipality built huts and barracks for 1,400 people at Klipspruit, some twelve miles from the centre of the town and next to a sewage disposal works. This location, which neither "the remoteness of Johannesburg nor the closeness of the sewage farm could be expected to endear ... to its native inhabitants",⁽¹⁾ was wholly inadequate but the only one until the City Council, under the stimulus of the mortality rate during the influenza epidemic, started

1. J.P.R. Maud: City Government; the Johannesburg Experiment (Oxford, 1935, p.135).

building in 1918 the Western Native Township, "in the neighbourhood of a site which, unlike Klipspruit, had ceased some years earlier to be used for the disposal of sewage".⁽¹⁾ Africans were legally bound to live in locations except those who resided on the premises of their white employers, but since the municipal location was always full, a large number of them found accommodation in white-owned slums.⁽²⁾ Hundreds crammed into the so-called Malay Location at Vrededorp amongst Coloured people and Indians and - a source of eternal friction - in the neighbourhood of white families. A few property owners there were taking in up to £500 a month in rents, with as many as ten men sleeping to a room, and there was little the authorities could do, short of building more houses for Africans. Crime and drunkenness were rife.⁽³⁾ As one observer, who cannot be suspected of excessive sensibility, put it:

"The lot of the native who has lost his place in his kraal and in the tribal lands, or who has been foolish enough to move with his family into Johannesburg, is certainly very hard." ⁽⁴⁾

This commentator was that "latter-day Jeffreys",⁽⁵⁾ T.G. Macfie.

1. Ibid, p.136.

2. Ibid, p.137.

3. Central Archives: Department of Justice 3/127/20 Sub-Inspector F.W. Lloyd, S.A.P. Western Area, Johannesburg to Deputy Commissioner of Police, Johannesburg 3rd September, 1919.

4. Union of South Africa: Report of the Department of Justice for the Calendar Year 1918 (U.G.36 - 1919), p.111.

5. R.C. Cope: Comrade Bill, the Life and Times of W.H. Andrews, Workers' Leader (Cape Town, n.d.), p.197.

Macfie was the Johannesburg magistrate who gained such notoriety from the severity of his sentences and the offensiveness of his obiter dicta at a trial of strikers in June, 1918. This was the so-called bucket strike of African sanitary workers, who, probably influenced by the successful white strike at the municipal power station in May, 1918, demanded an increase in pay of a shilling a day. Since their strike virtually crippled the sanitary service in most of Johannesburg, they were in a strong position, in fact too strong a position, because the gravity of the situation stimulated the authorities to swift reprisal. Arrested and charged under the Riotous Assemblies Act, all of them, with the exception of fifteen who were not under contract, were sentenced to two months' hard labour, and they were told from the bench that "they would be put back to do their work as convicts under armed guards and if they attempted to escape they would be shot if necessary to prevent their escape, and that if they refused to do the work they would be given lashes."⁽¹⁾ At the end of the month the sentences were suspended by the Supreme Court.⁽²⁾

The savage punishment of the "bucket strikers" aroused intense indignation among the African people. The prompt arrest of black strikers compared with the indulgence shown to white ones presented a glaring and painful contrast.

1. Union of South Africa: Report of the Department of Justice for 1918, p.110.

2. Ibid, p.110.

"The policeman is proverbially never there when he is wanted," wrote S.M. Makgatho in 1920, "but in the case of the Native the policeman is always there."⁽¹⁾ Throughout June there was a good deal of agitation for a shilling increase in the daily pay of black labour in Johannesburg, and this was conducted by the International Socialist League, the Industrial Workers of Africa and the Transvaal Congress, who held joint meetings in the latter part of the month and talked a lot about calling a strike. When, on 1st July, 1918, fifteen thousand black workers on three gold mines stopped work and had to be forced by police and soldiers to go back,⁽²⁾ it was assumed by the police and the magistrate that this was part of a general strike plotted by agitators. The brief mine strike, however, appears to have been spontaneous except to the extent that the strikers were worked up by the charged atmosphere in Johannesburg following the arrest of the sanitary workers. There does not seem to be any evidence that a general strike was seriously planned for 1st July or that the organisations active among black workers had sufficient influence to bring out 15,000 mine workers. The absence of precise plans emerges from speeches made at a meeting of the I.W.A. at Johannesburg on 27th June, 1918, attended by one hundred and fifty Africans and five Europeans.

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1. S.M. Makgatho: Presidential Address Delivered at the Ninth Annual Congress of the South African Native National Congress Held at Queenstown, Cape Province on the 24th May, 1920 (Pretoria, 1920) (pamphlet), p.5. This presumably was the address he would have given had he attended the Conference.
 2. Union of South Africa: Report of the Department of Justice for 1918, p.109, 111.

Msane (of the National Congress): " ... Are you ready for a strike? If you are ready for it, every-one of you must give his name now ... I have heard some people saying that we are going to strike on Monday the 1st July 1918. That is a mistake, on Monday the 1st July 1918 that is the day of the 1/- increase ..."

Member of the audience: " ... When shall you start to go in these mines taking names ... and who shall allow you to go in the compound and write these names there?"

Gibson (a European): " ... I wish the whole of the natives from here to Capetown and Durban strike just the same day and let that be called the general strike. We have seen our white fellow-workers, they are all on your side ..."

Ntodie (sic): "I want to speak just two or three words about the strike, as all the boys are saying they are going to leave work on Monday the 1st July 1918. I think that will be too soon to do that on Monday, and I do not think it will do at all and that was not passed by the Committee and I think you must not say anything of it again until you hear from us."

Mvabasa (of the National Congress): " ... I did not say we must strike on Monday 1st July 1918. I said the 1/- must start from 1st July 1918 and if it is not done you will tell us to fix the day of the strike ... On Monday that is the date you must get your shilling, and if not then we must fix the date of strike ..." (1)

Speeches in a similar vein were made at a well-attended meeting of the Transvaal Congress on Friday 28th June, 1918, which was attended by T.P. Tinker of the International Socialists.

Mvabasa: "Remember that we want a shilling per day increase to our wages. Do not listen to false statements stated to you by some people, some telling you that you must go on strike on Monday, some saying you must hit somebody, some saying you must break the stores to make a strike. Do not listen to those kinds of people, because they are misleading you, they want to get you into trouble. You must understand that we want no strike yet, but we shall first ask for a shilling increase per day from our employers on the 1st day of July 1918. It doesn't matter who it is

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1. Central Archives: Department of Justice 3/527/17 Report of District Commandant, S.A.P. Krugersdorp, evidently drawn up by an African detective or informer.

"man, woman, girl or boy working in the kitchen, stores, sanitary Compounds, Railway Compounds, Mining and in every place where a native is employed ... I can see that some of you think that we are too slow with the thing, but it is not so, we are trying to first make you understand and put you in the right way because we don't want any of you to be hurt or to get into trouble ... Keep cool and look and listen to us and we shall show you the way. I want to tell you this that our strike won't be the same as the whiteman's strike. You could see the whitemen when they strike, picking up stones and break the stores etc. stop all the trams and railways. When we go on strike we won't do all these sort of things ... You must insert this in your minds that when on strike you must take the attitude of sheep, be meek when the Police knock you about, be meek as a lamb ... You go out here and attend to your work until we tell you what to do if you don't get the shilling per day increase. Do not leave work until we tell you ..."

Talbot Williams (of the African Political Organisation): "How are you going to strike before having the natives in the mines organised. These natives in the mines are the main body on the Rand, you should first organise and then go on strike..." (1)

Nthodi (sic): " ... we should organise the Mine natives and tell them about this movement and what we want done so that when we go on strike they will also do so." (2)

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1. It is difficult to accept the version of events put forward by Macfie with its gross overestimation of the influence exerted by Williams first for and then against industrial action: "Williams was a man of considerable ability and energy, and during the first six months of 1918 he had succeeded in creating a fairly effective organisation amongst the mine natives, especially, for a general Native Strike on the 1st of July ... Talbot Williams, when it came towards the striking point, realised that if the movement succeeded, the consequences, not only to Europeans, but to coloured men, would be serious; and both his conscience, and probably his nerve, failed to support him. He made and signed a confession of his action and promised to do everything in his power to stop the movement ... This confession would not have been disclosed in his life-time, but he died of influenza in Kimberley in October last ... But for the recantation of this man and his efforts to stop the movement, which were in the main successful, the Native Strike of the 1st of July would have been serious ..." (Union of South Africa: Report of the Department of Justice for 1918, p.111). None of the speeches reported above indicates the creation of "a fairly effective organisation amongst the mine natives".
 2. Tinker contented himself with urging the people to continue working until told what to do by their leaders. (Central Archives: Department of Justice 3/527/17 Report of District Commandant, S.A.P. Krugersdorp n.d.).

Although such vague talk about striking and the insistence upon moderation and restraint can hardly be said to have constituted incitement to public violence, the authorities remained convinced that the International Socialists, the Native National Congress and the Industrial Workers of Africa were subversive and a public danger. On 6th July three members of the I.S.L. (J.P. Bunting, T.P. Tinker and H.L. Hanscombe) were arrested and at subsequent intervals five Africans, members of Congress and the I.W.A. (H. Aroni, J. Ngojo, M. Cetyiwe, D.S. Letanka and L.T. Khabana), all being refused bail. The case against them, however, collapsed when the chief prosecution witness, an employee of the Native Affairs Department, Luke Nassina, under cross-examination retracted the information he had given and repudiated his own sworn statement. (1)

The July strike marked the end of collaboration between the I.S.L. and Congress, which was apparently disillusioned with white radicals after their assurances of support from white labour proved to be worthless. (2) None of the former

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1. Central Archives: Department of Justice 7/20/2 J.P. Bunting to Minister of Justice 10th October, 1920; J.P. Bunting to Commissioner, D.I.D. Invervaal to Deputy Commissioner, Invervaal 21st October, 1920; J.P. Bunting to Commissioner, D.I.D. 17th and 18th July, 1920; M.C. Dore: C.C. cit., 1.1.27-1.2.27. According to Mr. Nassina, Nassina (variously spelled as Nassina and Nassina) was a genuine member of Congress, but he is wrong in saying that D.S. Mabaso and C.A. Duma were among the five arrested blacks. (Contact 30th July, 1920).
 2. The Cape Argus 20th January, 1920; M.C. Dore: C.C. cit., 1.21.27-21.27.

leaders attended the I.W.A. meeting that was convened a day or two after the strike. There were only twenty-one people present, including three whites, one of whom, Tinker, criticised the Transvaal Congress for failing to organise the mine workers.⁽¹⁾ The thin attendance may have been due to fear of arrest, but whether it was this or simply discouragement at what had happened, it showed clearly that the I.W.A. was no longer a force to be reckoned with, if it ever had been. Kraai and Cetyiwe, who were present at the meeting, must have left for Cape Town shortly after their trial.

There was a recrudescence of agitation at the end of March, 1919, when the Transvaal Congress began a passive resistance campaign against the pass laws, combined with a renewed demand for increased wages. A request was sent to the Native Recruiting Corporation to open negotiations for increased wages for mine workers, whereupon its General Manager, with the sanction of the Native Affairs Department, invited chiefs to visit the mines; and these duly denied the right of the Transvaal Congress to speak on behalf of the men in the mines, though at the same time making it clear that the demand for more pay was not justified. On Sunday 30th March there was a noisy meeting of Africans at Vrededorp and people were called upon to destroy their passes, after which an unfriendly mob went off to "see certain chiefs",

1. Central Archives: Department of Justice 3/527/17 Report of District Commandant, S.A.P. Krugersdorp n.d.

who had to be protected by the police. The following day a great crowd assembled at the Johannesburg pass office and, when a deputation, though sympathetically received, got no satisfaction from the pass officer, there was a renewed call for the destruction of passes and also for a strike. The proceedings were all very good-humoured, with Rule Britannia, cheers for the King, the Governor-General and President Wilson. The speakers insisted that there must be no violence and stewards collected from the crowd a large number of sticks and sjamboks. There was less response to a collection of money. Passes were demanded from those present and pickets made their way through the town requiring whomever they met to surrender them. Inevitably violence erupted, especially at Vrededorp and Fordsburg, where hundreds of arrests were made and there was enthusiastic intervention by white civilians anxious to be good citizens.⁽¹⁾ The trouble did not spread to the mines.⁽²⁾

The anti-pass campaign of March, 1919, seems to have been the high water mark of the influence of Congress. The declining support that it enjoyed after that time probably

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1. Cape Times 4th April, 1919. A public inquiry was subsequently held into charges of police brutality. (Cape Times 29th April, 1919).
 2. Central Archives: Department of Justice 3/1064/18 Provost Marshal of the Union of South Africa to the Minister of Justice March, 1919. The authorities were not unsympathetic: "The increased cost of living has undoubtedly pressed on the native workers and while all other classes have obtained substantial increases of pay the rate of native wages has remained the same."

had something to do with the failure of the campaign and no doubt was related also to another failure in 1919. In December of the previous year it had decided to try once more a tactic that had already proved futile, that of dispatching a delegation to Britain and Versailles to plead the African cause to the Imperial Government and to the Allied plenipotentiaries at the Peace Conference, and once more this had ended in humiliating and wretched failure.⁽¹⁾

"This the third Appeal of the Black Sons of Africa", said the Rev. Z.R. Mahabane at the Queenstown Conference of the Cape Congress in May, 1920, "has again been dismissed with heavy costs. England has finally washed her hands of the innocent blood of the Bantu races."⁽²⁾

Apart from one of those wild rumours that spread from time to time of a country-wide black conspiracy (in June, 1919),⁽³⁾ there was little hint of trouble on the Rand again until the end of the year, when, perhaps influenced by the Cape Town dock strike and certainly stimulated by the rising cost of living, the Transvaal N.N.C. resumed agitation for higher wages both amongst the mine workers and amongst the general labourers.⁽⁴⁾

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1. P. Walshe: Op.cit., p.62-65; Contact 30th July, 1960.
 2. Abantu-Batho 28th October, 1920.
 3. Cape Times 16th and 27th June, 1919.
 4. Central Archives: Department of Justice 3/127/20 Deputy Commissioner, C.I.D. Transvaal to Secretary, S.A.P. 19th February, 1920.

Many of the contract labourers on the mines came from areas severely affected by the great drought and all were resentful at the growing gap between wages and prices. The old grievances remained as well: the trading methods used by the concession stores and the exclusion of Africans from the more skilled tasks.⁽¹⁾ Congress, which was pressing for a minimum wage of 45s. a week for single men and 90s. a week for married men (in the case of those not fed and housed by their employers), succeeded in January, 1920, in getting a deputation received by representatives of the Chamber of Mines, the Chamber of Commerce, the City Council and other employers.⁽²⁾ Some of the employers responded favourably, offering in some cases a 25 per cent. advance.⁽³⁾ For the mine workers the Chamber of Mines recommended a slight increase of wages and it was because some mines procrastinated in implementing this that the second, and much more serious, post-war mine strike took place.⁽⁴⁾ Beginning on Tuesday, 17th February, four days later it was affecting 42,000 men at eleven mines. Altogether it lasted eleven days with no fewer than 71,000 men involved (37 per cent. of the total African labour force on the Rand

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1. Central Archives: Department of Justice 3/127/20 Deputy Commissioner, C.I.D. Transvaal to Secretary, S.A.P. 19th February, 1920.
 2. Cape Times 16th January, 1920.
 3. The Eastern Province Herald 25th February, 1920.
 4. Deputy Commissioner, C.I.D. Transvaal to Secretary, S.A.P. 19th February, 1920. The report calls the management of the Nourse and New Heriot Mines "singularly tactless".

gold mines), though the largest number away from work at any one time never exceeded 42,000.⁽¹⁾

The 1920 mine strike owed little to the direct intervention of Congress. The assessment of the International Socialists carries conviction:

"The strike is undoubtedly an instinctive mass revolt against their whole status and pig level of existence. The Native Congress has had very little to do with the movement, other than to hold a watching brief." (2)

In spite of its spontaneity, however, the strike, with its display of solidarity and its picketing, was remarkably well disciplined, as was observed by the former President of the Chamber of Mines, Sir Evelyn Wallers, who thought it a strike "in the true sense of the word".⁽³⁾ Naturally the authorities suspected the machinations of the Transvaal Congress and the International Socialists,⁽⁴⁾ but the

1. C.R. Diamond: Op.cit., p.47.

2. The International 27th February, 1920.

3. Quoted H.J. and R.E. Simons: Class and Colour in South Africa 1850-1950 (Harmondsworth, 1969), p.232.

4. The mind boggles at the following piece of sublime deductive reasoning emanating from the police at Boksburg. Two Africans who were arrested for incitement on 16th February in one of the compounds admitted "that they had attended a Native Congress meeting in Johannesburg on Sunday last. This clearly proves that the International Socialist League, through the Native Congress, is responsible for the present trouble." (Central Archives: Department of Justice 3/127/20 A/District Commandant, S.A.P. Boksburg to Deputy Commissioner, Transvaal 17th February, 1920).

suspicion had little foundation and the more perceptive police officers recognised that the men had genuine industrial grievances.⁽¹⁾ The fact that, while the strike was in process, the compounds were cut off from the outside world and collaboration between mines broke down, with some men going back to work as others went on strike, seems to postulate organisation only at compound level, the different compounds being united by a common feeling of expectancy and mutual sympathy, not unlike the climate of discontent and ill-defined conspiracy that brought on the revolt of the widely-dispersed sepoy regiments in the Indian Mutiny. Undoubtedly the Transvaal Native Congress contributed to this climate by demands for higher wages made upon employers⁽²⁾ and voiced at meetings that mine workers attended,⁽³⁾ and yet its contribution was small enough, if one judges from the mildness of its propaganda. Its Johannesburg meeting of Sunday 15th February, that is just before the strike, seems to have been largely confined to canvassing for new

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1. In this respect the District Commandant at Boksburg appears to have been less gullible than his colleague quoted above. (Central Archives: Department of Justice 3/127/20 District Commandant, S.A.P. Boksburg to Deputy Commissioner, Transvaal 4th March, 1920).
 2. Cf. Central Archives: Department of Justice 3/527/17 Deputy Commissioner, C.I.D. Johannesburg to Secretary, S.A.P. 27th November, 1919.
 3. Most of the crowd of three thousand at the Congress meeting of 1st February at Vrededorp were (according to the police) mine workers, one of whom, however, pointed out that "the Compound Managers at all the mines had instructed their police boys and native clerks to refuse admission to the compounds of any natives who were known to be members of the Congress in order to prevent the mine natives becoming acquainted with external affairs." (Central Archives: Department of Justice 3/527/17 Deputy Commissioner, C.I.D. Johannesburg to Secretary, S.A.P. 3rd February, 1920).

members.⁽¹⁾ Its meeting of the following Sunday, the 22nd, after the strike had been on for some days, was attended by only a few men from the mine compounds and its resolution did no more than express sympathy for the mine workers and counsel restraint. C.S. Mabaso and L.T. Mvabasa, who ran the meeting, displayed little enthusiasm for extending the mine strike to the town. Then on 25th February seven hundred Africans heard the same men say that an immediate strike in the town was out of the question because there was no money for strike pay and that a deputation would be sent to the Prime Minister. Only if the deputation achieved nothing would there be recourse to striking.⁽²⁾ Meanwhile, without any concession promised to the strikers, the Government brought the mine stoppage to an end by the use of police and military force, which resulted in some violence and loss of life.⁽³⁾

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1. Central Archives: Department of Justice 3/127/20 Deputy Commissioner, C.I.D. Johannesburg, to the Secretary, S.A.P. 17th February, 1920. It does not seem impossible that the strike took the National Congress by surprise. the Msimang brothers, who were both at the centre of affairs, left Johannesburg on 17th February, Selby for Bloemfontein, Richard for Pietermaritzburg, his home town, and their departure is difficult to explain except by the supposition that they were ignorant of any impending disturbance. If they were off to stir up trouble in the Orange Free State and Natal, which the C.I.D. no doubt suspected, their efforts were without success. (Central Archives: Department of Justice 3/127/20 Deputy Commissioner, C.I.D. Johannesburg to Secretary, S.A.P. 20th February, 1920).
 2. Central Archives: Department of Justice 3/127/20 Deputy Commissioner, C.I.D. Transvaal to Secretary, S.A.P. 23rd and 26th February, 1920.
 3. Central Archives: Department of Justice 3/127/20 Commissioner, S.A.P. to Secretary for Justice 26th February, 1920.

A good many mine workers were among the thousand men who attended the meeting organised by the Transvaal Congress on the last Sunday of February at Vrededorp. The crowd got completely out of hand and the outcome illustrated how ineffectual and devoid of influence the Congress leaders were. Mabaso refused to divulge what had happened at the deputation's meeting with General Smuts the previous Friday unless adequate funds were subscribed for a strike, and this so incensed a section of the crowd that accusations of misuse of funds were flung at the Congress leaders. As they dispersed members of the crowd threw stones at the police and passers-by and soon white onlookers, some of whom had firearms, were retaliating. In the mêlée eight Africans were killed and eighty wounded by men of the South African Police and the South African Mounted Riflemen and by white civilians.⁽¹⁾

Remarkable as these industrial disturbances on the Rand were, they reveal characteristics which explain why Johannesburg did not feature significantly in the black labour movement of the early 1920's. Although the discipline and cohesion of the 1920 strikers cannot be denied, the fact remains that the nature and composition of the labour force in the gold mines militated against the establishment of a

1. Central Archives: Department of Justice 3/127/20
Deputy Commissioner, C.I.D. Johannesburg to Secretary,
S.A.P. 1st, 2nd and 5th March, 1920; S.A.P., Fordsburg
to Deputy Commissioner, Johannesburg District 1st March,
1920.

continuing organisation. The compounds, with their restricted access, easily isolated at the first sign of trouble, were not conducive to industrial organisation. They were very different from the Docks Location in Cape Town, where control and supervision were not at all strict.⁽¹⁾ One cannot but notice, too, the ruthlessness with which the authorities on the Rand acted. The display of force during the Cape Town dock strike was very mild compared with the killings and woundings that took place in the Village Deep mine (three killed and forty wounded) in February, 1920.⁽²⁾ If comparisons are to be made, attention must be drawn to the fact that white labour in Cape Town, disappointing as its support for the dock strikers proved to be, was far more sympathetic than were the workers on the Rand, where appeals for individual white labour leaders, almost all associated with the I.S.L., at least to refrain from subverting the efforts of African labour to achieve better conditions were scorned.⁽³⁾ When, during the anti-pass campaign of March, 1919, there was a strike of white municipal workers, who formed a "board of control", the so-called Johannesburg soviet, the strikers "offered assistance to the

1. "... 900 raw natives housed within the Location which is situated in the middle of the City ... do not appear to be under strict control." So alleged the Cape Town Superintendent of Natives in 1924, a charge that was rejected by the Assistant General Manager of the Railways and Harbours. (Cape Archives: Minutes of Native Affairs Committee, City of Cape Town, Vol. I, Parcel 107, Item 338).

2. R.C. Cope; Op.cit., p.215.

3. H.J. and R.E. Simons: Op.cit., p.321.

Government to prevent outrages on white women and children."⁽¹⁾ During the strike of February, 1920, the white South African Mine Workers' Union advised its members to continue operating the mines as far as possible and some of them actually did "Kafir work".⁽²⁾ Such encouragement as the black labour movement on the Rand received came from white socialists who were radical and unpopular with white opinion and very different from those respectable and moderate men who helped the I.C.U. in Cape Town. Then again, the labour force was made up mainly of Africans and these for the most part were still at heart subject to the countryside and the tribe. The valuable support which the I.C.U. enjoyed from the Coloured people of the Cape was largely absent.⁽³⁾

The organisations that were active on the Witwatersrand, whilst they stirred up and tried to exploit the discontents there, were ill-equipped for the task of organising and leading a labour movement. The I.W.A., because of its revolutionary proclivities, invited official suspicion and, in any case, lost whatever influence it had after the strikes of June and July, 1918. The other organisation, Congress,⁽⁴⁾ had a small

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1. E. Roux: S.P. Bunting; a Political Biography (Cape Town, 1944), p.42.
 2. H.J. and R.E. Simons: Op.cit., p.231; C.R. Diamond: Op.cit., p.47.
 3. Cf. Union of South Africa: Report of the Department of Justice for 1918, p.111.
 4. The I.W.A. and Congress were the only important organisations. There was also the Allied Coloured Labour Association (The Friend 7th March, 1919) and in April, 1920, there was an attempt to form a Transvaal Native Domestic Servants' Union (Central Archives: Department of Justice 3/127/20 Commissioner, S.A.P. to Secretary for Justice 28th April, 1920). No doubt there were other small and ephemeral bodies as well.

membership⁽¹⁾ and was discredited by the failure of its 1919 mission to Europe and by its indecisive leadership in the wage disputes of 1918-1920. In the ensuing months the leadership of the Transvaal Congress, under the influence of the visiting West African educationist, Dr. Aggrey, turned away from industrial organisation to participation in the Johannesburg Joint Council of Europeans and Natives, an unofficial body founded in 1921 by sympathetic whites anxious to bridge the racial gap, and also in the consultative machinery (such as it was) set up by the Native Affairs Act of 1920.⁽²⁾ It is possibly because the Transvaal leadership was reverting to a less militant policy, or because it was disheartened by the disappointing results of industrial action, that it remained aloof from the Bloemfontein Conference.⁽³⁾ Whatever the reason for the failure of

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1. At the end of 1919 there were only 677 registered members in Johannesburg (Central Archives: Department of Justice 3/527/17 Deputy Commissioner, C.I.D. Johannesburg to Secretary, S.A.P. 27th November, 1919) and these were reluctant subscribers (Central Archives: Department of Justice 3/527/17 Deputy Commissioner, C.I.D. Johannesburg to Secretary, S.A.P. 13th December, 1919).
 2. P. Walshe: Op.cit., p.96-99.
 3. Such an hypothesis finds no support from the police report of the S.A.N.N.C. Queenstown Conference previously cited (P.J. Whitaker to Deputy Commissioner, Grahamstown 2nd June, 1920), which speaks of the "fire-brand types ... from the North" and describes L.T. Mvabasa as "a dangerous and bad tempered native", but that report is clearly exaggerated and contrasts with the police report of the annual meeting of the Transvaal Congress. The Pretoria meeting appears to have been restrained. (Central Archives: Department of Justice 3/127/20 Inspector i/c C.I.D. Johannesburg to Secretary, S.A.P. 6th April, 1920). It has been suggested that S.M. Makgatho, who was President of both the Transvaal Congress and the National Congress, was opposed to the formation of a separate industrial organisation. (S.W. Johns: Loc.cit., p.180). He did not attend the Queenstown Conference, which was chaired by Chief Mini, President of the Natal National Congress. (The Queenstown Daily Representative 29th May, 1920).

the Transvaal Congress to attend that Conference, there was, with the presumed demise of the Johannesburg I.W.A., no other organisation to take its place. It seems as though the I.W.A. and T.N.N.C. had sufficient influence and energy to forestall the emergence of a genuine labour organisation on the Rand without having the capacity themselves for taking full advantage of such opportunities as were offered in the wartime and post-war situations.

Durban presents a striking contrast to Johannesburg. It was the only major seaport that did not produce an African labour union in the post-war period. It experienced sporadic trouble, but nothing of moment.⁽¹⁾ Several possible explanations spring to mind, none very convincing. It is possible, for example, that the Zulus had been cowed by the severity of the suppression of the Bambata rebellion of 1906-1908, but it seems unlikely that that essentially tribal protest had much to do with the problems of urban Africans.⁽²⁾ Another possibility is that no Zulu leader capable of organising a trade union had appeared, and it seems likely that only a Zulu could have done this. The later history of the I.C.U., especially the experience of Kadalie in Durban, lends support to that possibility. It should be borne in mind that not only did the African population of the city have a marked degree of homogeneity, but the Coloured element

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1. A threatened strike of African railwaymen was averted in July, 1919, by a mixture of persuasion and force. Six hundred men were involved. (Cape Times 17th July, 1919). In February, 1920, 290 African municipal policemen and in March, 1920, 1,200 African dockworkers staged one day strikes for increased wages, the former receiving an increase, the latter a promise that the questions would be examined. (Union of South Africa: Social Statistics No. 3 - 1921, p.59, 61).
 2. S. Marks: Reluctant Rebellion; the 1906-1908 Disturbances in Natal (Oxford, 1970), p.310.

was negligible, while the Indian community kept itself to itself.⁽¹⁾ The leader enjoying the greatest prestige at this period was the Rev. John Dube, former President-General of the S.A.N.N.C., but his interests lay principally in the field of education and were remote from labour problems.⁽²⁾ Perhaps there was no labour movement because the Africans in Durban were less committed to urban life than those who lived in N'dabeni or the locations of Port Elizabeth and Johannesburg. The impermanence of the black labour force is shown by the very small number of women, children and elderly people living in the city.⁽³⁾ Another possible explanation lies in the restrictive policy pursued by the municipal authorities, who forbade public meetings for Africans, both indoors and outdoors.⁽⁴⁾ The imposition of this restriction, which hampered trade union activity, was facilitated by the character of the accommodation provided

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1. Kadalie in his autobiography (p.61-62) describes how he was refused breakfast at an Indian tea room on his first morning in Durban in July, 1924. "I had come to Durban to organise African workers, but on the first day I found there was another job for me to do there, and that was to bridge the gap existing between the various non-European races." He got his breakfast, but never succeeded in bridging the gap.
 2. P. Walshe: Op.cit., p.228. In 1924 Dube admitted that he had given no attention to organising the workers. (Ilanga lase Natal 24th October, 1924).
 3. In 1921 1,229 women (15-50), 1,416 children (under 15), 403 men and women over 50, but 25,557 men (15-50) (Union of South Africa: Census of Population 1921, Part VIII - Statistics Regarding Non-Europeans, U.G.40 - 1924).
 4. The Workers' Herald 15th May, 1925.

by the City Council. There were married quarters for only a couple of hundred men, women and children and the rest of the accommodation, housing some three thousand men and a hundred women, was of the barrack or hostel type,⁽¹⁾ which helped exclude undesirable outside influence. It is true that thousands of men and women, very many of them domestic servants, lived in single quarters on their employers' premises in town, but they were widely dispersed and subject to strict control. They often lived in deplorable conditions. A pre-war account describes what happened at night to men who worked in the city's stores.

"Natives are left in the yard till six in the morning. Between nine p.m. and six a.m. they are shut up like rats in a hole, and cannot get out ... Some of these backyards are not fit for dogs, let alone human beings." (2)

They were hardly prospective members of a trade union and it is unlikely that by 1920 the situation had improved much, if at all. Certainly more accommodation had been provided in the location, but, without doubt, a great deal of hardship remained.

In the other Natal towns there was unrest that took the form of complaints about low wages during the post-war inflation and occasional brief strikes.⁽³⁾ As in the case

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1. F.A. Saunders: Municipal Control of Locations; a Paper Read at the 13th Session of the Association of Municipal Corporations of the Cape Province (Grahamstown, 1920) (pamphlet), p.11.
 2. The South African Native Races Committee: Op.cit., p.41.
 3. For example, on the coal mines in April, 1919. (Cape Times 29th and 30th April, 1919). Cf. H.G. Ringrose: Trade Unions in Natal (Natal Regional Survey No. 4, 1951), p.10-11, 14-15.

of Durban, however, no trade union was thrown up. A strike at Pietermaritzburg in January, 1920, of two hundred municipal labourers, who knew what they wanted - a rise from two shillings to five shillings a day - but admitted to no leaders,⁽¹⁾ was like many another small spontaneous strike throughout South Africa at this time. The fact that no trade union was established among the labourers in the coal industry must be explained to some extent by the same factors that inhibited labour organisation in the gold and diamond mines. Grievances do not seem to have been so acute as on the Rand, partly because wages were comparatively good and accommodation reasonable.⁽²⁾ The labour force was partly Indian and partly African and no doubt this racial division tended to discourage common action.

Kimberley, East London and Port Elizabeth were represented at Bloemfontein and had their labour organisations. Kimberley had a branch of Msimang's organisation and apparently had produced no spontaneous union of its own.⁽³⁾ There were some stirrings in the town, but not much industrial unrest. The attitude of Kimberley employers seems to have been sympathetic and able to ward off discontent, at least to an extent. It

1. The East London Daily Despatch 31st January, 1920.

2. The South African Native Races Committee: Op.cit., p.36-37; S.T. Van der Horst: Native Labour in South Africa, p.187. Natal was not affected by the great drought of 1919, which was so significant for the migrant workers of Johannesburg and Cape Town.

3. There were the Coloured (or, perhaps, open) unions of the Tailors and the Carters. (Central Archives: Department of Justice 3/1064/18 Commissioner, S.A.P. to Secretary for Justice 27th August, 1920).

was the Bishop of Kimberley who presided over a meeting of July, 1919, when moderate demands were put to representatives of the Chamber of Commerce, the municipality, South African Railways and De Beers Diamond Mines. De Beers, which had the reputation of being a good employer,⁽¹⁾ took steps to safeguard their workers against the effects of the rising cost of living by selling food and clothing at a loss in the compound stores and also by increasing wages.⁽²⁾ The very fact that their men were in compounds, even (or, perhaps, especially) well-run ones, would tend to discourage trade union ideas spreading from outside.

East London had no big employer like De Beers with its compounds. The city had very little industry and was economically dependent upon its port. Most black labourers, apart from domestic servants, worked for the municipality, various commercial enterprises and South African Railways and Harbours, and they lived in two somewhat unruly locations, the East Bank (the bigger of the two) and the West Bank.⁽³⁾ Early signs of an incipient labour organisation appeared among the dockworkers, who were not contract workers, but casual labourers whose precarious livelihood made them particularly

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1. H.M. Robertson: 150 years of economic contact, Part II, p.11-12.
 2. Cape Times 8th July, 1919.
 3. Cape Archives: Minutes of Meetings of Cape Town Native Affairs Committee Vol. II, Parcel 107, Item 339, Senior Inspector, S.A.P. to Deputy Commissioner, Cape Town 25th May, 1927.

vulnerable to unemployment in times of depression and to hardship in times of rising prices. They tended to be restless and easily roused, and it was they who staged East London's first major strike among black workers. This was as early as 1911, when those working at Buffalo Harbour stopped work in support of a demand for an increase in the daily rate of pay from 2s.6d. to 3s. (1st September, 1911). The strike then spread to all Government-employed dockworkers, with the exception of the more highly skilled workers, such as the lightermen. Although, at first, the authorities brought in convict labour to break the strike, four days later they capitulated, so precipitately that they took the strikers by surprise, many of whom had taken advantage of the respite for a holiday at home in the Transkei.⁽¹⁾ The success of this strike was an incitement to workers employed in various occupations by the municipality and those employed on the railways, but, lacking the skills of the dockworkers, such men were more readily dispensable and their demands were met only with dismissal.⁽²⁾ Finally the men employed by the stevedoring companies and the lightermen, the aristocrats of the labour force, struck, the former successfully, in order to restore the pay differential disturbed by the increase granted to the dockers, the latter without success.⁽³⁾

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1. ^{R.} H.H. Smith: The Development of Labour Organisation in East London, 1900-1948 (Unpublished thesis, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, 1949), p.147-149.
 2. Ibid, p.149-150.
 3. Ibid, p.151-152.

Renewed demands for a wage increase were made in July, 1918, as a result of the rising cost of living, but, in spite of the precocity of its black labour movement, East London experienced no violence and wage demands were in a spirit of ... compromise and without bitterness. One reason for this was that employers tended to be tolerant and to display understanding. Another was the moderating influence exerted by Dr. Walter Rubusana, the minister of the Congregational Church in the East ~~Bank~~ Location and a Vice-President of the South African Native National Congress until the establishment of the Bantu Union, to which he transferred his allegiance. When a mass meeting of African and Coloured workmen in the location on 6th July, 1918, demanded a shilling a day extra (local wages apparently ranging at the time from 2s. to 3s.6d. a day), the Mayor consented to appear at their next meeting, which was held on 23rd August under the chairmanship of Dr. Rubusana. The Mayor took up a conciliatory attitude, announced the municipality's decision to pay a war bonus and promised to use its influence for similar action by private employers. His audience, however, though politely applauding, made it abundantly clear that, prices being what they were, it was not interested in less than an additional shilling a day and that it wanted satisfaction before the end of the month. The upshot was that on 28th August a committee of the local Chamber of Commerce received a delegation led by Dr. Rubusana, several government officials also being in attendance, and offered, after preliminary comments upon the law abiding character of "the Natives as a whole" and upon the respect

enjoyed by Dr. Rubusana, to recommend that employers should increase wages by 6d. a day, an offer which the delegates' leader agreed to commend to the workers. This bargain lasted until the beginning of 1920, when, as a result of the continued rise in prices, there were renewed demands for higher pay.⁽¹⁾

Early in January, 1920, municipal employees put in a request for a further increase of wages and once again the Mayor (a Labour M.L.A., James Stewart) expressed his readiness to meet the workers half way. Another meeting of employers agreed to a minimum daily wage of 3s. for unskilled workers, the local office of South African Railways and Harbours already having recommended to the General Manager a sixpence rise.⁽²⁾ There was a month's lull, then a letter was circulated among employers from an organisation calling itself the East London Native Employees' Association and claiming a membership of two thousand. The Chamber of Commerce described the Association's demand ~~for~~ ^{as} an extra two shillings a day/"most unreasonable", but it was not outrageous as a negotiating gambit and the employers were prepared to talk. A conference of employers appointed a sub-committee to inquire into the cost of living and this recommended a further sixpence a day, which came to be the offer made to the men.⁽³⁾ This offer, following as it did so soon after

1. Ibid, p.152-158.

2. The East London Daily Dispatch 9th, 10th and 15th January, 1920.

3. The East London Daily Dispatch 20th, 21st and 25th February and 20th March, 1920.

the previous increase, must have allayed popular discontent and the Association was not sufficiently/^{active}again to attract the notice of the white press. It seems that when the Chamber of Commerce tried to get into touch with it to request it to send a delegation, there was no response and the sixpenny offer, in March, 1920, had to be announced by the Superintendent of Locations.⁽¹⁾ However, it is apparent that Dr. Rubusana was associated in some way with it and that it received some support from local white radicals.⁽²⁾

The report of the delegations to the Bloemfontein Conference suggests that the East London Association linked up with similar organisations in Port Elizabeth and Aliwal North, to form the Native and Coloured Workers' Union of East London, Port Elizabeth and Aliwal North. Aliwal North, with its Coloured and African population of fewer than three thousand, could have been of little significance, and its unlikely appearance during this phase of black labour history can have been due only to the influence of events at East London. It was at Port Elizabeth that the important developments occurred during 1920.

At this period Port Elizabeth had a larger African population than greater Cape Town had (11,472 compared with 3,707, 1921 census), slightly smaller than that of East

1. ^RH.H. Smith: Op.cit., p.160-161.

2. The International 20th February, 1920.

London (11,601); and also a very substantial Coloured population (13,203 Coloured and Asian, compared with only 2,006 in East London). The Africans were accommodated in a government location, New Brighton, built in 1903, five or six miles outside the city, but many had settled and bought land at Korsten, a village which lay outside the municipal boundaries and had, besides African residents, a very mixed population of Cape Coloured, Indians, Chinese and Europeans.⁽¹⁾ Living conditions in New Brighton and Korsten, though not uniformly bad, were undoubtedly a cause of dissatisfaction, especially in the latter.⁽²⁾ New Brighton, intelligently administered and provided with facilities, such as water and lighting, that Korsten lacked, had an Advisory Board of six members, four of whom were elected, and an elected Chairman of Public Meetings responsible for their conduct. There was strict control over the consumption of liquor, only limited quantities of "Kafir beer" being allowed. Nevertheless, if the rent was low, the housing was rudimentary. Korsten, where in contrast liquor was freely obtainable and some of the houses were "indescribably filthy and insanitary",⁽³⁾ was much more turbulent, though the location, too, did not lack an unruly group.⁽⁴⁾ In short, there was an environment likely to

1. Union of South Africa: Report of the Native Economic Commission, 1930-1932 (U.G. 22 - 1932), p.70.

2. Cape Times 24th December, 1919.

3. Union of South Africa: Report of the Native Economic Commission, p.70.

4. F.A. Saunders: Loc.cit., p.14, 19.

foster a radicalism that was prepared to exploit the more insistent grievance of the decline in wartime and post-war real wages.

According to an appraisal of December, 1920, the cost in Port Elizabeth of foodstuffs and other necessities "ordinarily consumed and used by natives" rose 105% between 1914 and 1920. As in East London, discontent among the unskilled, Coloured and African, became articulate as early as 1918, when employers agreed to a sixpenny daily rise, bringing 1914 wages up to 3s. a day for men and 2s. a day for women.⁽¹⁾ In April of the following year there was a strike of some two hundred black municipal workers, who were demanding an extra shilling a day; and their demands were partially met by the City Council.⁽²⁾ These workers, either before or after the strike, were organised in a union, the Native and Coloured Municipal Employees' Association of Port Elizabeth.⁽³⁾ There were also several multi-racial unions among both skilled and unskilled. Some of the constituent unions of the local Federation of Trades had very substantial non-white memberships, and the local branch of the Building Workers' Union admitted Coloured tradesmen. Generally speaking the interests of the black skilled were adequately safeguarded.⁽⁴⁾ In July, 1919, there was, as in

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1. Union of South Africa: Report of the Commissioners appointed to enquire into the causes of, and occurrences at, the Native disturbances at Port Elizabeth on the 23rd October, 1920 p.1-3.
 2. Cape Times 3rd April, 1919.
 3. Cape Times 17th October, 1919.
 4. Cape Times 21st January, 1919; Union of South Africa: Report of the Commissioners, p.2-3.

Cape Town, a successful strike of tramwaymen, though this involved only a handful of non-whites.⁽¹⁾ A general union for the unskilled made its appearance early in 1920, born of the discontent which was engendered by the continued rise of prices and by the famine conditions prevailing in the "native territories".⁽²⁾ New leaders came to the fore.

The clamour for higher wages originated among the dockworkers, who were almost certainly influenced by events in Cape Town, but a meeting convened for Sunday morning, 11th January at New Brighton to demand a wage increase for them turned into a mass demonstration attended by four thousand people from a wide area and calling for an all-round rise for African workers; and there are clear signs of the emergence of a new radical group, which attempted to seize control of the proceedings. This was the first occasion that the claim which was to be constantly reiterated in the coming months, for ten shillings a day for male workers (subsequently to be conjoined with a demand for seven and six a day for women) was made. There was also talk of a general strike. However, it appears that the "older and more level-headed" men reasserted themselves and, with this group in control, it was resolved that a union should be formed which would seek affiliation with the local Federation of Trades.⁽³⁾ A few days later, the Railways and Harbours

1. Cape Times 21st July, 1919; Union of South Africa: Annual Report, 1919, p.45.

2. The Eastern Province Herald 29th January, 1920.

3. The Eastern Province Herald 14th January, 1920.

Administration, possibly in an attempt to ward off trouble, though it characteristically announced that the question of a wage increase had been under discussion some weeks and denied that there had been any "organised demand" for more money, granted a rise of 6d. a day, plus 7d. a day war bonus,⁽¹⁾ an increase that evoked little gratitude among its employees, who complained that their wages would still be below Cape Town's. Other employers were also stirred into action and a meeting, presided over by the Mayor, agreed to invite a delegation from the locations to hold discussions on the wages issue.⁽²⁾ A deputation was got together, clearly representing the old moderate leadership, and was received by the employers on Saturday, 17th January and offered a rise of 6d. a day for all non-Europeans earning less than 27s. a week, with the exception of those in the building trade.⁽³⁾

On Sunday 18th January the deputation, accompanied by the Superintendent of the location, passed the offer on to a mass meeting at New Brighton, but it appears that it had a mixed reception from the crowd, because after the Superintendent's departure the official meeting broke up in disorder and another unauthorised one was immediately held by the

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1. The Eastern Province Herald 15th and 16th January, 1920.
 2. The Eastern Province Herald 16th January, 1920.
 3. The Eastern Province Herald 22nd January and 3rd February, 1920. Women were also excluded from the offer. Those in the garment trade were working from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. for a weekly wage of 14s.6d. (Union of South Africa: Report of the Commissioners, p.2).

radicals, the most important of whom was Samuel M.M. Masabalala.⁽¹⁾ Masabalala, born in 1877 at Uniondale, was some years older than Msimang and considerably older than Kadalie, and had had a somewhat chequered career. After going as a young man to Rhodesia with the Pioneers and serving in the 1895 rebellion there and also in the Boer War, he had worked for some time as a teacher,⁽²⁾ but in 1920 was employed as a clerk by an insurance company.⁽³⁾ As a labour leader, he seems to have been something of a demagogue and an indifferent organiser, while his command of English was inferior to Kadalie's and, most certainly, to Msimang's. Kadalie's later strictures⁽⁴⁾ upon his competence cannot be considered unprejudiced, but they are supported by the evidence. As the treasurer of the Cape Congress,⁽⁵⁾ Masabalala enjoyed the backing of the Rev. Mahabane.⁽⁶⁾

An "unofficial" delegation led by Masabalala which interviewed the Mayor on Monday 19th received short shrift,⁽⁷⁾ but in the struggle that ensued between the moderates and the

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1. The Eastern Province Herald 19th, 20th and 21st January, 1920.
 2. T.D. Mveli-Skota: Op.cit., There is some doubt about his date of birth. (The Eastern Province Herald 28th October, 1920).
 3. The Eastern Province Herald 28th October and 2nd November, 1920.
 4. C. Kadalie: My Life and the I.C.U., p.52-53.
 5. Abantu-Batho 28th October, 1920.
 6. The Eastern Province Herald 27th January, 1920. Mahabane had been ordained in Port Elizabeth and lived there from 1914 to 1916. (Z.R. Mahabane: Op.cit., p.ii).
 7. The Eastern Province Herald 21st January, 1920.

radicals Masabalala came out on top as the most widely supported leader. If the employers hoped to head off trouble by making concessions, they spoilt their chances by offering too little too late. As it was, their miserly sixpence satisfied nobody and was a betrayal of the moderates, who were anxious to maintain a grip upon the situation and whose hand would have been strengthened by greater generosity from the employers.⁽¹⁾ In order to escape from the charged atmosphere of mass meetings, they secured, on 27th January, the election by the residents of Port Elizabeth, Korsten and New Brighton of a committee of twelve (the members of the official deputation of 17th January all being elected to it), known as the Native Employees' Committee, that would negotiate with employers in an effort to get a better offer than the unacceptable 6d. a day. Since the capacity to pay higher wages varied from trade to trade, it was suggested that a number of sub-committees should be formed to deal with employers in the different trades.⁽²⁾ Masabalala responded by forming a general union, which very soon had four

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1. The discussion in the City Council on the sixpenny offer is instructive. One councillor moved a minimum wage of thirty shillings a week, but found no seconder. A less generous attempt to make the increase "a bonus during the pleasure of the Council, so that it might be taken off the more easily when the price of mealies came down" found some support, though it was defeated. The mover of this proposal was evidently offended because "some natives were sending 10/- a week up to Kafirland and also were putting money into the Post Office Savings Bank." Such affluence apparently did not merit indulgence. The Eastern Province Herald 22nd January, 1920).
 2. The Eastern Province Herald 21st January and 3rd February, 1920.

thousand members.⁽¹⁾ It was the new union that made the running. The employers were unmoved and refused to budge from the existing offer. The African and Coloured workers continued to seethe with indignation, which did not, however, boil over, and a half-hearted strike of municipal workers on 23rd February did not even get going.⁽²⁾ The crisis came in October, 1920, when the Bloemfontein Conference was already in the past.

Masabalala probably attended the conference of the S.A.N.N.C. at Queenstown and he almost certainly went to the Bloemfontein Conference as well.⁽³⁾ Yet the Cape Province was not well represented at Bloemfontein. There were two delegates from Aliwal North, presumably representing the Native and Coloured Workers' Union of East London, Port Elizabeth and Aliwal North, one from Queenstown and another from Touws River in the Western Cape.⁽⁴⁾ Curiously there is

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1. Union of South Africa: Report of the Commissioners, p.3; The Eastern Province Herald 22nd November, 1920.
 2. The Eastern Province Herald 24th February, 1920. There was a three day strike of 200 African harbour workers in April, but this was over the arrest of a man for theft. (Union of South Africa: Social Statistics No. 3 - 1921, p.63).
 3. He does not figure in the list of delegates in The Friend (14th July, 1920), but, since he was certainly in Bloemfontein at that time (The Friend 22nd July, 1920), he must have attended.
 4. The Friend 14th July, 1920.

no evidence of any delegate from East London, though this does not necessarily mean that none attended. From Cape Town came Kadalie, Paulse, Gumbs and Ncwana of the I.C.U., Kraai and Cetyiwe of the I.W.A. and I. Ben Nyombolo of the Cape Congress (and possibly of the I.C.U. or the I.W.A. too).⁽¹⁾ Altogether at least thirty delegates attended the Conference, two-thirds of them from branches established by Msimang or under his influence in the Orange Free State, the northern Cape (no fewer than four from Kimberley and one from Westminster) and Basutoland (Mafeteng and Mochale's Hoek). Selby Maimang acted as chairman. In his opening address he spoke of the enemies of the African and Coloured workers.

"The white worker has only the capitalist as his foe, while we have the capitalist and the Trade Unions to fight against." (2)

It was, however, a fight to be waged with moderation and without violence.

The first item on the agenda was the formation of a single labour union for "all the non-European workers of Africa, south of the Sahara", and a lengthy discussion gave birth to the following resolution.

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1. Kraai, Ncwana and Nyombolo were reported present by the South African Police (Central Archives: Department of Justice 3/1064/18, Commissioner, S.A.P. to Secretary for Justice 30th November, 1920. There is a note on Nyombolo's background: "Ben Nyombolo, who was formerly an interpreter at the local Magistrate's Court, is reported to be an ex-convict and to have served a sentence at Cradock gaol. He was discharged from the service and is now living at West London."), the others by The Friend 14th July, 1920.
 2. The Friend 14th July, 1920.

"That it is the opinion of this representative Conference of non-European workers to form one great union of skilled and unskilled workers of South Africa, south of the Zambesi, and that it be an instruction to all unions represented in this Conference to carry out this great principle and recommend or approach (sic) all other unions not represented with a view thereto, based on the following, among other, objects:-

"(a) That the objects of this Union shall be to bring together all classes of labour, skilled and unskilled, in every sphere of life whatsoever, to promote the social, moral and intellectual interests of its members, to obtain and maintain for them equitable rates of wages, and reasonable conditions of labour, to regulate the relations between employer and employed and to endeavour to settle differences between them by amicable and conciliatory means. These objects shall be promoted as provided for in the following codes of rules.

"(b) To promote and regulate the conditions of work in the farms and to promote the general and material welfare of the members engaged in agricultural pursuits and to help them to obtain a living wage and reasonable contracts and to do all possible to afford members evicted from farms protection.

"(c) To see that all females in industries and domestic services are protected by the organisation, by encouraging them to enrol in all branches of the Union and to help them to obtain a living wage.

"(d) To promote co-operation, insurance, sick and out-of-work benefits, old age pensions, and such other objects as the Union may from time to time determine." (1)

The new organisation was given the cumbersome title of the Industrial and Commercial Coloured and Native Workers' (Amalgamated) Union of Africa, the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of Africa (I.C.W.U.) for short. Since its "code of rules" has passed unrecorded, there is no means of telling how far it differed from the I.C.U.'s Constitution, but it is apparent that the I.C.W.U. was a confederation of

1. Ibid.

the organisations sending delegates to the Bloemfontein Conference, not a single union, and that a draft constitution was not drawn up until July, 1921.⁽¹⁾

The preponderance of Orange Free State delegates would account for the importance attached to the organisation of farm workers, who could have been of scant interest to the I.C.U. in Cape Town and Masabalala's union in Port Elizabeth and East London. The I.C.U. had been open to "all persons employed in industry and commerce", there evidently being no notion of having rural members.⁽²⁾ In the Free State, in contrast, there was little industrial employment and, apart from those employed in the coal mines, most urban Africans worked either for the municipalities, for shops and stores and for South African Railways, or as domestic servants. The rural problem predominated. There were only three African reserves, comprising 245 square miles, about 0.5% of the total land area,⁽³⁾ and most African country dwellers were labour tenants upon European-owned farms. While the circumstances under which such tenants lived naturally varied from district to district, from farm to farm, the grievances that could arise from the system can

1. Cape Times 23rd July, 1921.

2. Cape Times 9th October, 1919.

3. Union of South Africa: Report of the Native Economic Commission of 1930-32, p.175.

all too easily be imagined.⁽¹⁾

An emphasis upon the rights of women workers was another unexpected development. Moreover one of the resolutions subsequently passed was a demand for equal pay for equal work. Women were promised the same rights and privileges as men in the new union. The presence of Mrs. Maxeke, who was a formidable woman,⁽²⁾ must be the explanation for all this.

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1. "The usual remuneration for a Native's services, which frequently include the services of other members of his family, is a portion of land ploughed and planted either by the employer or the Native. Consequently the remuneration is entirely dependent on the seasons which are very uncertain and on other factors such as insect plagues affecting the crop. In bad seasons when the Native realises that there is little or no hope for a crop for him he becomes discontented and trouble arises between his employer and himself. A certain amount of food, usually mealies or mealie meal is provided for in the contract and is frequently inadequate ... In bad seasons the Native is faced not only with no remuneration for his services but with a possible scarcity of food as well. Further the lack of any wage in cash or in kind convertible into cash makes it necessary for the Native to borrow from his employer in order to pay his Taxes, buy clothing, sugar, tobacco, etc. He gets into debt with his master who thus obtains a further hold over him ... The non-payment of cash wages is a principal cause of the failure to pay Tax. An increasing number of farmers are paying Taxes for their Natives either as an advance or as portion of their remuneration in order to avoid the inconvenience of the Natives being arrested and prosecuted, but about half the farmers do not. It should be remembered, however, that a large number of employers of Native farm labour belong to the 'bywoner' or agriculturalist class who are themselves in straitened circumstances." (Ibid, p. 196. The passage, an excerpt from a report by the Magistrate of Reitz, is taken at random).
 2. "Mrs. Maxeke is a very powerful native speaker and appeared to exercise a very considerable hold upon the meeting ..." The meeting referred to was of the Transvaal Native National Congress in January, 1920. (Central Archives: Department of Justice 3/527/17 Deputy Commissioner, C.I.O. Transvaal to Secretary, South African Police 21st January, 1920).

Among other subjects discussed were the recruiting system - "detrimental to the progress of all native races in the sub-continent" - and the pass laws - "unjust and degrading and a direct encouragement to the increase of criminal practices amongst the natives".⁽¹⁾ Yet the Conference was not opposed to registration for identification purposes provided that Africans were not required to produce passes or poll-tax receipts.⁽²⁾ This acquiescence in registration, reflecting as it does a point of view acceptable in the northern provinces, where pass laws were enforced, but not in the Cape, where Africans were to be highly critical of similar registration arrangements provided for in the Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923, illustrates the great influence exercised by the Orange Free State in the Conference.

The agenda also included the question of South African representation at the International Labour Conference to be held at Geneva in 1921, the cost of living and the establishment of a minimum wage for African and Coloured workers, working hours, and education.⁽³⁾ The minimum wage proposed was 8s. a day for urban workers (and one shilling an hour for overtime) and 4s.6d. a day for rural workers (and sixpence an hour for overtime).⁽⁴⁾

1. The Friend 14th July, 1920.

2. Ibid.

3. The Eastern Province Herald 7th and 16th July, 1920.

4. Cape Times 30th August, 1920.

"From the beginning to the end," wrote Clements Kadalie in 1922, "the Conference was a failure."⁽¹⁾ As an attempt to form a union for all African and Coloured workers in southern Africa, it was indeed, as it turned out, a failure, bringing only dissension that persisted for several years. Kadalie was probably put out by the dominant rôle played by Selby Msimang, who was elected President of the new union and whose newspaper, The Messenger, was adopted as its official organ.⁽²⁾ The chief cause of the dispute, however, was the unexpected rejection of Kadalie's candidature for the secretaryship of the new body. He wrote later,

"The self-centred intellectuals led by a well-known political opportunist ... objected to my having been appointed General Secretary of the movement on the grounds that I could not speak any of the South African Native languages."⁽³⁾

The "political opportunist" was most probably Conan Doyle Modiakgotla, who had some prominence in the last years of the I.C.U.⁽⁴⁾ and the man preferred to Kadalie was Ben Nyombolo.⁽⁵⁾

1. Ilanga lase Natal 20th January, 1922.

2. The Friend 14th July, 1920.

3. C. Kadalie: Manifesto to the members of the I.C.U., 9th July, 1928 (B/UCT).

4. The same man "drafted the manifesto on behalf of the 'Clean Administration Group'" (Ibid), which was an anti-Kadalie group of 1928. There are two possible candidates, either Modiakgotla or Alex P. Kajno Maduna, who also attained some importance in the I.C.U. These two apparently "fathered" the Clean Administration Group. (A.W.G. Champion to Members of the National Council, I.C.U., 26th June, 1928. F 1928/53 and B/UCT. Of the two only Modiakgotla was at the Bloemfontein Conference. (The Friend 14th July, 1920).

5. According to S.W. Johns (Loc.cit., p.182) Kadalie was "defeated by a delegate from Kimberley", whom H.J. and R.E. Simons (Op.cit., p.241) identify as M. Mocher. The most likely explanation is that Kadalie was rejected on the motion of a delegate from Kimberley, viz. Modiakgotla.

Kadalie could not forgive Msimang for what had happened and stored up in his mind other grievances that would no doubt have been forgotten if their amicable relations had remained undisturbed, though it is rather unlikely that the flamboyant Kadalie and the sober Msimang would have worked in joint harness for long. Afterwards the former complained that the Conference was a plot contrived by Msimang,

"the idea being that the local people at Bloemfontein would place him in power ... Mr. Selby Msimang informed Cape Town which has been originally the headquarters of the I.C.U. that he had organised over twenty-five branches in the Free State with a membership of nearly 15,000. What did our delegates find at the Bloemfontein Conference? The only statistics produced was (sic) only 700 members and worst of it all we found that there was a great discontentment between the people and the leader. We tried our best to make the Conference a success, but achieved nothing for the race which is so desired, seeing that everyone who attended the Conference aimed at being on top of the ladder ... What is it then when a man of intellect such as Mr. Selby Msimang does not realise courtesy? What vindicates the idea of ignoring your own recognised mother? Without any hesitation Mr. Msimang during the Bloemfontein Conference deliberately showed that he was not a member of the I.C.U. and he even ignored what this Organisation had achieved for them and for the race in general ... It has also been often mentioned that at this Conference we decided that Bloemfontein was the headquarters of this so-called one big union formed, the writer being a prominent delegate at the Conference emphatically denies the truth of these criticisms and self-made decisions ...

"We are now confronted as to what made the Bloemfontein Conference a failure. I could only sum it (sic) with this fact that self-aggrandisement was the main reason." (1)

Even Msimang's acting as chairman was, Kadalie argued, the usurpation of a function that strictly belonged to Gumbs. (2)

Clements Kadalie did not break with the I.C.W.U. immediately. When, at the beginning of August, he and Fife of the I.C.U. addressed a meeting at N'dabeni, where Nyombolo spoke of the Bloemfontein Conference and the establishment of the I.C.W.U., there was no hint of any division of opinion. (3) Indeed, the July Conference appears

1. Ilanga lase Natal 20th and 27th January, 1922.

2. Ibid 27th January, 1922. According to this account Gumbs was President of the I.C.U., whereas he was in fact Vice-President.

3. Cape Times 9th August and 6th October, 1920. Kadalie is described as "hon. secretary of the Union", presumably in the sense that he was Secretary of what was now considered an affiliated member of the bigger organisation, of which Nyombolo was General Secretary.

to have induced a certain euphoria. A mass meeting held by the I.C.U. and the I.W.A. on 25th July resolved to set up "a non-European Workers' Federation, to include Indians, Malays, Coloured and natives ... to work and manage its own affairs independently of the whites' Federation of Trades."⁽¹⁾ An early number of The Black Man, which apparently was started straight after the Conference and which was regarded as the official newspaper of the I.C.U. in Cape Town,⁽²⁾ devoted itself to an account of the Conference proceedings.⁽³⁾ Yet it was the Editor of the paper, S.M. Bennett Ncwana, who moved in a subsequent meeting of the I.C.U.'s Executive that the Conference's resolutions should be repudiated and that the I.C.U. should preserve its separate identity.⁽⁴⁾ The occasion

1. Cape Times 30th August, 1920.

2. Ibid.

3. Central Archives: Department of Justice 3/1064/18, Commissioner, South African Police to Secretary for Justice 27th August, 1920.

4. Ilanga lase Natal 27th January, 1922. Kadalie puts no date to the event. Though unmentioned in his autobiography, the Bloemfontein Conference was counted as the first I.C.U. Conference.

of the dispute, if not its cause, was the I.C.U.'s handling of the Cape Town wage demands of August-September, 1920, when Kadalie with his strike threats was thought to have acted with too great independence and militancy. Selby Msimang was not directly involved at all and the quarrel was precipitated by a Cape Town member of the I.C.W.U., Simon Jordan, who was also branch secretary of the Cape Congress at N'dabeni. Jordan complained that Kadalie had failed to consult the other unions and the General Secretary of the I.C.W.U.⁽¹⁾ In this dispute the I.W.A. sided with the I.C.U. and ultimately coalesced with it (or so the evidence suggests).⁽²⁾

In the meantime, while the I.C.W.U. in Cape Town was breaking up, Masabalala in Port Elizabeth was running what was nominally a local branch of that union. On his return from the July Conference, he plunged into a further bout of agitation for higher wages. In August his organisation held its annual meeting, at which he, after being re-elected President, delivered a speech, larded with scriptural allusions and expressions of loyalty to the Empire and reiterating the demand for a higher wage.⁽³⁾ The following

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1. Cape Times 24th September, 1920; Central Archives: Department of Justice 3/1064/18 Commissioner, S.A.P. to Secretary for Justice 30th November, 1920.
 2. Cape Times 4th October, 1920, and 17th February, 1921.
 3. The Eastern Province Herald 26th August, 1920.

month, his tone becoming more threatening, the Mayor granted him an interview, which resulted in the offer by the employers of an additional sixpence a day, bringing the minimum daily rate from 3s.6d. to 4s.0d., still far short of the ten shillings demanded.⁽¹⁾ Mass meetings continued to be held and there was a great deal of talk about striking. Such excitement was aroused that, on Sunday 17th October, at a Korsten meeting, Dr. Rubusana, who, being in Port Elizabeth for a church meeting, had been asked by the conservatives to throw his influence on to the side of moderation, was assaulted. One of the reasons for the hatred displayed towards Rubusana was that he had forsaken the Cape Congress, to which Masabalala and, no doubt, his colleagues also belonged, to join the Bantu Union, of which he was Vice-President. Rubusana could not have improved his popularity among members of Congress by his observation at the Queenstown Conference of May, 1920, that Congress could think of nothing to do but "to ask for money from the natives, which money was devoted to their own use."⁽²⁾

1. Builders' labourers, who had caught up to 3s.6d., remained at that. (Union of South Africa: Report of the Commissioners, p.1).

2. Central Archives: Department of Justice 3/127/20 Deputy Commissioner, C.I.D. Johannesburg to Secretary, S.A.P. 28th May, 1920.

The violence done to Dr. Rubusana was most opportune from the point of view of the public authorities, who regarded Masabalala as a dangerous extremist, especially after Monday 18th October, when his union (in spite of the opposition of some of its committee, who thought that there were insufficient funds at its disposal) announced the beginning of a strike on 3rd November. Early on Saturday 23rd October Masabalala was arrested (without warrant and at the initiative of the District Commandant of the South African Police) on affidavits made by Rubusana (and another man, named Kala or Kale), who alleged that it was his inflammatory speech that had brought on the assault of the previous Sunday, though, in fact, Masabalala, together with some of his colleagues, had gone to the doctor's assistance.⁽¹⁾ In the course of that morning a crowd of two or three hundred gathered outside the police station where Masabalala was in cellssand, when the request by a deputation for the prisoner's release on bail was refused by the District Commandant and the Acting Magistrate, threatened to release him by force if he were not set free by five o'clock. The deputation, which included the local secretary of the I.C.W.U., Alfred Sidzumo, endeavoured to pacify the crowd, but with no success. In the meantime some of the police had been armed and stationed on the steps leading to the main entrance. As

1. Union of South Africa: Report of the Commissioners, p.1, 12; The Eastern Province Herald 24th and 28th September, 12th, 15th, 25th and 28th October, and 22nd November, 1920.

the afternoon wore on hundreds of people, as many as three thousand, of all races, men, women and children, were attracted to the scene, as much by idle curiosity as by a desire to take part, and conflicting views upon the violence, determination and size of the demonstration are to be found in the findings of the three man Commission which inquired into the events a month later and the evidence of the police and the newspaper reports of the time.

The Commissioners considered that the threat was never very serious; if the demonstrators were armed with sticks, that was not unusual for men coming into town from the location; if they shouted and waved their sticks, it was because they were the worse for drink (a point on which there was general agreement), and the blows they directed at the police were half-hearted and easily parried; and if the crowd was large, it was because there were so many bystanders.⁽¹⁾ This contrasts with the newspaper report just after the event, which speaks of "determined attacks made by a great mob of armed natives."⁽²⁾ To disperse the crowd a charge was made by four mounted policemen, but this had only a temporary effect, as did "the jet of a moderate-sized hose", which was soon out of action because the nozzle

1. Report of the Commissioners, p.4.

2. The Eastern Province Herald 25th October, 1920.

fell off.⁽¹⁾ However, the comedy of the situation was soon blighted by the intervention of a number (about thirty) of civilians, mostly ex-servicemen, who made their way into the police station, armed themselves with rifles and posted themselves, some on the steps, others, the majority, on the balcony. Although Captain Halse, the District Commandant, accepted these voluntary additions to his garrison, he omitted to place an officer or N.C.O. in charge of the men on the balcony, and, it seems fairly certain, neither he nor the Acting Magistrate gave them definite instructions not to fire without orders.⁽²⁾

After the fiasco of the moderate-sized water hose the crowd began throwing stones at the men on the balcony.

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1. "The fire station is situated in the vicinity of the police station but it never occurred to the police to ask for the assistance of the fire brigade to disperse the crowd." (Union of South Africa: Report of the Commissioners, p.5). As it happened, the fire brigade was busy elsewhere.
 2. According to the police submission, the civilians "were given express orders (their italics) not to fire until ordered." (Ibid, p.10). The police explanation for the opening of fire without orders was that the first shots were fired from the crowd, and that there was such a din that the men reasonably assumed that an order to fire had been given, but they had not heard it. (Ibid, p.13). Sub-Inspector Hart on the steps below was able to stop the firing there as soon as it started, but on the balcony, where there was no one in charge, it went on until an order could be conveyed upstairs.

"It was at this moment that one or two shots were fired, whether from the crowd, the balcony or the steps, it is difficult to say with any degree of accuracy, in view of the most extraordinary conflict of evidence on this most important point, but whatever doubts there may be in regard to that question, it is established beyond doubt that, immediately after the first shot was fired, the crowd stampeded in all directions and that a rapid and sustained fusillade was directed on the retreating crowd from the police station for 60 seconds as alleged by some witness, or two minutes as alleged by others. One civilian admitted to firing 10 shots, another as many as 13 shots, with the most fatal results, viz: - 1 European and 23 native or coloured males were killed or died of wounds. Native and coloured wounded and treated in hospital 45 - females 1. European males wounded and treated in hospitals, 4; European females (1 died from a blow from a native) (sic). Total casualties: 76. Only 2 of these people were shot immediately in front of the steps, the others fell in different parts of the street away from the police station as far as Castle Street corner - 100 yards distant." (1)

What was established beyond all doubt was that ~~neither of the two police~~ officers in charge gave an order to fire. What is also certain is that, whether or not the first shot came from a revolver in the crowd (and not only does the evidence seem to cast doubt on this, but also it is clear from the tone of its report that the

1. Ibid, p.5. Not all the black wounded were treated in hospital. (The Eastern Province Herald 25th October, 1920).

Commission was highly sceptical about it⁽¹⁾), the firing was wild and prolonged beyond even the most generous estimate of the danger to the men in the police station. Again, it is apparent that the temper of the crowd was not so menacing as to frighten off a number of Europeans that mingled with the demonstrators right up close to the police station steps. The white girl who died from a blow on the head was struck down by an African already mortally wounded.⁽²⁾ Much indignation was expressed about the fate of this victim; but there was more reticence about her companion, shot in the head by rifle fire; and about the European spectator, struck by a bullet that passed through his body with such velocity that it killed an African standing at his side.⁽³⁾

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1. Police claim that some of the demonstrators were carrying firearms (Constable Grant: "I saw five natives with revolvers.") are not substantiated by the first report in The Eastern Province Herald (25th October, 1920), where there is no suggestion that anyone actually saw anyone in the crowd in possession of a revolver. The first report that the crowd had first fired appeared in The Eastern Province Herald on 26th October. "It was not necessary to have this particular proof of the murderous mood of the attackers to justify the authorities in what followed, but we are glad that it has been secured because it places the matter beyond all question." (leading article). By the following day the story had been further elaborated. "The native who used the revolver in the crowd ... was shot dead. He was seen by a constable to be firing, and the officer brought him down with deliberate aim. The revolver fell from his hand, but was retrieved by other members of the crowd and carried off." (The Eastern Province Herald 27th October, 1920).
 2. Union of South Africa: Report of the Commissioners, p.8.
 3. The Eastern Province Herald 25th October, 1920.

The events of the afternoon shocked and frightened the European inhabitants and the belief that a cunning conspiracy was afoot possessed them. Although the local newspaper, which had reported only in a cursory way the attack upon Dr. Rubusana, gave no hint that violence was anticipated, people remembered now that their servants had told them stories of impending disturbances.⁽¹⁾

Police reinforcements were hurriedly summoned from Grahamstown and places further afield, and patrols of police and armed civilians sent out. There were two clashes during the night, one with a group of men that was thought to be aiming to sabotage the power station, the other with a small party attempting to set fire to a petrol store. The former group broke under fire, leaving behind one man killed and seven too badly hurt to move.⁽²⁾ Fear was not confined to the whites. For, after the shooting, hundreds of location residents left for the country.⁽³⁾

Events in Port Elizabeth aroused indignation throughout black South Africa, not least in Cape Town, where large, though orderly, meetings were held to protest against the

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1. Union of South Africa: Loc.cit., p.15-22. "Generally, the nerves of the Europeans, especially the ladies, were on edge as a result of the truculent attitude of the natives." (C.E. Stidolph, Acting Magistrate, Port Elizabeth, at the time of the riot).
 2. Ibid, p.21; The Eastern Province Herald 25th October, 1920.
 3. Union of South Africa: Loc.cit., p.15; The Eastern Province Herald 29th October, 1920.

shooting and to demand a commission of inquiry.⁽¹⁾ In appointing a commission the Government was actuated no doubt by the same consideration that swayed it in the case of Kadalie's threatened deportation, viz. its need for maximum electoral support in the pending general election. This is borne out by the composition of the Commission, which was made up of Dr. Abdurahman and Dr. A.W. Roberts of Lovedale Mission (tacitly watching over Coloured and African interests respectively) and C. Schweizer (a former S.A.P. member of the Legislative Assembly), the Chairman. The Commission reported on 11th January, 1921. While condemning "in the strongest terms" the behaviour of the crowd "in assembling in force ... with the avowed determination of forcibly effecting the release of Masabalala", it was, at the same time, highly critical of the action of the police. The District Commandant was censured for refusing bail and for his failure to impose a proper discipline upon the civilians who volunteered their services. Its final conclusion was a stern indictment:

"That all the firing which took place after the mob broke away was directed against fugitives; that it was unnecessary, indiscriminate, and it was moreover brutal in its callousness, resulting in a

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1. Central Archives: Department of Justice 3/1064/18, Commissioner, South African Police to Secretary for Justice 30th November, 1920. It is interesting to notice that there was little reaction in Durban. "So far, the recent native trouble at Port Elizabeth has had no perceptible effect on the local natives; in fact few of them appear to be aware of the recent happening at that place." (Ibid) Cf. also 3/127/20 Deputy Commissioner, C.I.D. Transvaal to Deputy Commissioner, C.I.D. for the Union 9th November, 1920.

"terrible toll of killed and wounded without any sufficient reason or justification." (1)

It need hardly be said that the Commission's Report aroused intense anger in some quarters. The Secretary of Police at Pretoria invited comments from the Deputy Commissioner of the Eastern Cape and the District Commandant, Port Elizabeth, and these were published with the report (with consecutive pagination). Inspector Halse in particular considered that at least one member of the Commission, Dr. Abdurahman, came to Port Elizabeth with his mind already made up; and he also claimed that, in spite of everything, he had been right to arrest Masabalala and that he had been legally unable to grant bail. The rest of the police witnesses, displaying a united front, whether commended or censured by the Report, insisted that the whole crowd and not just a few hundred demonstrators in front was bent upon violence from the beginning and was armed with a variety of weapons; that the first shots came from the crowd; and that an order to fire would have been given before long in any case.

These police afterthoughts incensed in turn the Commissioners, who protested vigorously to the Acting Prime Minister at their attachment to the Report.

1. Union of South Africa: Report of the Commissioners, p.8-9.

"This seems to be a most extraordinary proceeding which cannot be otherwise construed than as a reflection upon the impartiality of the members of the Commission.

"It may be quite regular and proper that the report, after having been delivered to the Prime Minister, should be brought to the notice of the Commissioner of Police or the Minister of Justice, and that an explanation should be demanded from any officer or member of the Police whose conduct or behaviour may have been adversely commented upon in the report; but to attach the explanations or opinions, which are received from such interested persons, to the report of the Commission appears to us to be irregular and improper; for if the police officers and men who were actually concerned in the shooting at Port Elizabeth, are to be allowed to sit, as it were, in appeal upon the decision arrived at by the Commission, then it is difficult to understand why the Government had not accepted the police report of the occurrences given at the inquest as final and conclusive, and there would have been no necessity for the appointment of a Commission to make the full enquiry.

"We may fairly be allowed to ask why our report was referred to the Police for consideration and comment, and their statements and comments thereon not referred to us before being attached to, and published with, our report." (1)

After making their protest, the Commissioners went on to point out the discrepancies between the police comments attached to the Report and the police evidence of the previous year, drawing attention particularly to the earlier statement of the District Commandant that he refused bail because he thought it undesirable (not because, as he said later, he had no power to grant it) and suggesting that there had been a prior agreement between him and the Acting Magistrate to arrest Masabalala and refuse him bail.

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1. Union of South Africa: Letter addressed to the Acting Prime Minister by the Members of the Commission appointed to enquire into the Native Riots at Port Elizabeth on the 23rd October, 1920 (Annexure 656 - 1921).

The bloodshed of 23rd October left many Europeans chastened and willing to make some sort of amends. The Mayor called upon employers to pay their men a living wage.⁽¹⁾ Masabalala was taken to Grahamstown and was detained until late in November, when he was committed for trial charged with incitement under the Riotous Assemblies Act.⁽²⁾ In his absence the local African leaders summoned Msimang by telegram from Bloemfontein to represent their interests. Getting wind of this the police at Port Elizabeth got in touch with their colleagues at Bloemfontein to find out whether it was safe to let Msimang into the city, and they were assured that he was very moderate and likely to do good. The first thing the I.C.W.U. President did after his arrival on 27th October was to persuade the local union to withdraw its threat of a strike, which had been brought forward from 3rd to 1st November⁽³⁾ and, when this was done, he led the employees' delegation at a joint conference with the employers, presided over by the Mayor, on Tuesday 9th November.⁽⁴⁾ Msimang did not put a very convincing case to the employers, chiefly because he was in an unfamiliar situation. Relying largely upon general statements about

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1. The Eastern Province Herald 28th October, 1920.
 2. The Eastern Province Herald 20th and 22nd November, 1920.
 3. The Eastern Province Herald 26th October, 1920.
 4. The Eastern Province Herald 3rd and 10th November, 1920. Msimang created a good impression upon the whites. "The Mayor said that he found him a very reasonable man, and that he seemed anxious to put matters here right." (3rd November).

the growing incidence of theft, the depreciation of the pound, and the pressure of poverty that induced people to listen to agitators, he did not present, as he had done at Bloemfontein, a typical family budget. Moreover, he got his figures wrong, claiming erroneously that the pre-war minimum had been 3s. to 4s. (not 2s.6d.) and that wages had since gone up only 6d. (not 1s.6d.). One of his difficulties was that he was clearly uncomfortable about the demand for ten shillings to which the local leaders were committed, and would have preferred a demand for a more realistic 6s., which itself had no chance of acceptance. The employers were also addressed by one of the moderates, Edward Ngesi, who had been chairman at one of Dr. Rubusana's meetings in October,⁽¹⁾ and he too insisted that the people were hungry because of the high cost of food. For all the anxiety of the Mayor, fearful of further disturbances, to get them to make an offer, the employers were most unwilling to do so and put forward a series of arguments to justify their reluctance, arguments that were not altogether consistent with one another or necessarily relevant, and that, in so far as they gave figures, gave ones chosen in an arbitrary and partisan fashion. The case against a rise of wages was, in brief, that workers had no genuine grievance, but had simply been stirred up by agitators; most men were paid more than the agreed minimum

1. The Eastern Province Herald 15th October, 1920.

and those who were not paid more were only "pick and shovel men" from the Territories who could afford to send money home any way (a fact which, for some reason, seems to have rankled); wages in Port Elizabeth were high compared with those prevailing in Johannesburg and East London; business was bad and higher wages would mean fewer jobs. It was even suggested that the trouble lay in the unrestricted export of maize and a resolution was carried (though with many abstentions) protesting at the Government's practice of permitting such exports. In the end the employers agreed to the appointment of a committee of employers and employees to examine jointly the real cost of living of working families.⁽¹⁾ The committee met the following week and arrived at a settlement of 4s.6d. a day for African and Coloured labourers, with the exception of those in the building trade.⁽²⁾

Later in November Masabalala, released on bail, came back to Port Elizabeth, where he was enthusiastically welcomed by two thousand supporters. Carried away by the excitement of the occasion, the crowd spurned the 4s.6d. minimum and decided to persist in the demand for ten shillings.⁽³⁾ But such a demand was more unrealistic than ever. Of all the reasons put forward by the employers

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1. The Eastern Province Herald 10th November, 1920.
 2. The Eastern Province Herald 20th November, 1920.
 3. The Eastern Province Herald 24th and 26th November, 1920.

for not making a more generous offer, the assertion that prices were tending downwards once again was the best-founded one. The index of retail prices of cereal foods, which in 1920 stood at 2814 (1000 in 1910), went down to 2132 in 1921, while the index of retail prices of all food in Port Elizabeth, after rising from 1089 in 1914 to 2183 in 1920 (an increase of 100.4%), fell to 1682 in 1921 (54.4% over 1914), with the downswing beginning roughly in the middle of 1920; and since the minimum wage for unskilled labour had advanced from 2s.6d. a day to 4s.6d. (an increase of 80%), real wages were rising. Monetary wages seem to have remained stable during 1921.⁽¹⁾ The Chairman of the Commission of Enquiry of November, 1920, considered 4s.6d. not unreasonable, but his colleagues, though they too thought that the ten shillings demanded in October had been "rather excessive and unreasonable" did not agree that 4s.6d. was adequate.⁽²⁾

As the cost of living declined anger and resentment in Port Elizabeth subsided. By the end of the year the police were able to report that the "native position" was

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1. Union of South Africa: Official Year Book No. 5, 1922, p.305, 327, 329. Average weekly rates of wage paid to non-white male unskilled workers in Port Elizabeth at the end of 1921 ranged from 25s.6d. to 33s.0d. a week, according to the trade. Building wages, which had always lagged behind wages in other employment, stood at 20s.11d. a week.
 2. Union of South Africa: Report of the Commissioners, p.1, 3.

back to normal,⁽¹⁾ although trials of blacks arrested in connection with the riot were going on into December with severe sentences being passed.⁽²⁾ Masabalala was released when Dr. Rubusana withdrew charges.⁽³⁾ He next became absorbed in politics with comic and curious results. In the general election of 1921 his support was enlisted by the Nationalists in Uitenhage, who subsequently came to regret their decision because of the embarrassment he caused them. In a speech delivered on their behalf at Enon, a Coloured mission station near Uitenhage, in January Masabalala was reported by Reuter to have said,

"God could not help the natives and coloured people, nor could his angels; but only the Nationalists could do so ... if the Nationalists got into power the coloured people would be given rifles and the Kaffirs and Boers would unite ..." (4)

When the National Party issued a denial, a delighted South African Party gathered affidavits from members of the audience who swore that that was what they heard Masabalala say. But if the Nationalists were embarrassed, so were Masabalala's colleagues. What Msimang, who was in Uitenhage with him, thought of it all remains unrecorded,⁽⁵⁾

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1. Central Archives: Department of Justice 3/1064/18, Acting Commissioner, S.A.P. to Secretary for Justice 31st December, 1920.
 2. The Eastern Province Herald 7th December, 1920.
 3. Contact 30th July, 1960.
 4. The Eastern Province Herald 29th January, 1921.
 5. After the election Msimang was called upon to pacify the African and Coloured residents of Uitenhage, whose ire had been aroused by one or two unprovoked attacks upon innocent passers-by by Nationalist supporters disappointed by the election result. (The Eastern Province Herald 16th February, 1921).

but Sidzumo, the I.C.W.U. Secretary in Port Elizabeth, in a letter to The Eastern Province Herald, claimed that it was all a mistake.

"The wording of Reuter's report is not correct. I think they must have misunderstood my interpreting the speaker's speech that the natives are going to get rifles from the Nationalists if they are in power, etc. That is a wild statement, Sir; I don't think a man who was not insane would make such a statement." (1)

However, whether his Enon speech was correctly reported or not, the mere fact that Masabalala lent his support to the Nationalists scandalised many African and Coloured people, not least Kadalie, who threw up his hands in righteous horror at the Uitenhage goings-on. "It is advisable", he wrote to the Cape Times,

"at this juncture to declare under the instruction of my executive that the I.C.U. entirely discredit such idiotic and obnoxious action adopted by Mr. Masabalala in advising the natives and coloured electors to vote for a Nationalist Government ... If the Nationalists tell us that in their Government the black man shall possess rifles in defence of himself I may just as well tell them the black men seek no dominion of man over man as they are aiming at, but seek a voice among the peaceful civilised people ..." (2)

In Port Elizabeth there was a schism in the I.C.W.U. ranks, and that can plausibly be put down to distaste among some of its supporters either for Masabalala's style of oratory or for his espousal of the Nationalist cause. Adherents and critics engaged in an exchange of anathema and

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1. The Eastern Province Herald 29th January, 1921.
 2. Cape Times 31st January, 1921.

excommunication that was to be repeated in other places and times all too often in the history of the I.C.U. In March, 1921 Masabalala's opponents met to deprive him of his presidency, then, a few days later, another meeting expelled the expellers, or, at least, suspended them.⁽¹⁾

On Wednesday 20th July, 1921, the second annual conference of the I.C.W.U. was opened at N'dabeni, Cape Town, by the Location Superintendent.⁽²⁾ There were several odd features about this meeting. For one thing, unlike the Bloemfontein Conference, where delegates from the Orange Free State predominated, the Cape Town Conference apparently had no representatives at all from that province, even Selby Msimang, who presided, representing several Cape "constituencies" (West London, De Doorns, Touws River and Queenstown), and it was an overwhelmingly Cape function.⁽³⁾ Although this can be explained partly by the change of meeting place, the total absence of Free State representatives does not point to the survival there of a very vigorous organisation.⁽⁴⁾

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1. The Eastern Province Herald 17th and 31st March, 1921.
 2. The Conference, on the Thursday, was addressed (non-committally and platitudinously) by C. Pearce (now a Member of the Provincial Council and soon to be a Member of the Legislative Assembly), Batty's opponent in the parliamentary by-election of December, 1918. (Cape Times 22nd July, 1921).
 3. The claim of one delegate that there were "delegates in attendance from the various parts of the four Provinces" (Cape Times 26th July, 1921) can only be dismissed as exaggeration.
 4. Yet the I.C.W.U. was active in the O.F.S. certainly as late as the previous December, when African workers at Kroonstad were threatening to strike for 10s.6d. a day for men and 4s.6d. for women. (The Eastern Province Herald 7th December, 1920).

The published (though probably incomplete) list of delegates included only fifteen names, one being Msimang himself, and, apart from one from Johannesburg (J.W. Dunjwa, who was a distinguished member of Congress, but not attached, as far as it is known, to any labour union, and who may simply have chanced to be in Cape Town), all the representatives were from the Eastern and Western Cape.⁽¹⁾ Another perplexing feature was the listing of Clements Kadalie of the I.C.U., who had broken with the I.C.W.U., and of C.H. Meyer of the South African Workmen's Co-operative Union, which had never belonged to it,⁽²⁾ and this gives rise to the conclusion that the Conference was a renewed effort to establish "one big union", a conclusion borne out by the press report that it was being held "under the auspices of the Non-European National Industrial Union", an otherwise unknown body.⁽³⁾ In his opening address Msimang "held out the hand of good fellowship to all who might desire to build up one great union of coloured labour throughout South Africa." He continued,

"Whether you are an enemy or a friend, we say to you come. Come and help us solve these troubles of ours."⁽⁴⁾

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1. Cape Times 21st July, 1921.
 2. Meyer's initials are transposed, but the evidence seems to substantiate this identification.
 3. Cape Times 21st July, 1921. According to Mr. Msimang one of the aims was to persuade Kadalie to rejoin the I.C.W.U. (Interview with Mr. Msimang 29th June, 1971).
 4. Cape Times 21st July, 1921.

While there is no evidence at all that Kadalie attended, a reference to the "S.A. Union" does indicate (but merely that) Meyer's presence. S.M. Bennett Ncwana, who was in the Kadalie camp, certainly attended and spoke in favour of co-operation and unity.⁽¹⁾ Apart from Msimang, Dunjwa, Nyombolo, the I.C.W.U.'s General Secretary, and Masabalala the delegates were undistinguished and, even for the Cape, not widely representative. Of the fifteen delegates a third represented Cape Town (including N'dabeni and Simons-town). Two came from Port Elizabeth, one from Johannesburg, the rest from Willowmore, Somerset East, Grahamstown and Worcester. There was no one from East London (or Aliwal North).

Imvo Zabantsundu reported sourly:

"All the stock grievances were ransacked, and a long boohoo pronounced on them ... Fancy demonstrations were indulged in about Bulhoek and the Port Elizabeth riots." (2)

Bulhoek, just outside Queenstown, had witnessed, just two months before the Conference, the massacre of the Israelites, a bizarre sect that resisted eviction from crown land, nearly three hundred of them being killed or wounded.⁽³⁾ To

1. Ibid.

2. 2nd August, 1921. Imvo was run at King William's Town by Tengo Jabavu, who was out of sympathy with the main body of African opinion.

3. Union of South Africa: Report of the Native Affairs Commission for the Year 1921 (U.G. 15 - 1922), p.9-11.

commemorate the loss of life the I.C.W.U. and the Cape Congress organised a Sunday demonstration during the period the labour Conference was in session.⁽¹⁾ The Conference also resolved to send a deputation to the Government to request relief for the relatives of the victims,⁽²⁾ to keep the anniversary of the massacre, 24th May, (as well as that of the Port Elizabeth tragedy, 23rd October) "as national days for all workers of non-European descent", and to establish a relief fund.⁽³⁾

The "stock grievances" that were "ransacked" were low wages, the high cost of living, the pass laws, the maldistribution of land, farm labour conditions (including "the blatant shooting of workers on the farms"⁽⁴⁾), the recruiting system for the mines ("nothing other than forced labour and tantamount to slavery"⁽⁵⁾), and, a problem of growing concern as the economy slid into depression, unemployment.⁽⁶⁾ The remedy put forward by Selby Msimang for the problem of surplus labour in the towns has some interest when considered

1. Ilanga lase Natal 29th July, 1921.

2. Cape Times 22nd and 27th July, 1921.

3. Cape Times 27th July, 1921.

4. Cape Times 23rd July, 1921.

5. Cape Times 22nd July, 1921. It was decided to send emissaries to the "territories" to persuade men not to enter into contracts. (Cape Times 23rd July, 1921).

6. The Conference also discussed the possibility of acquiring a printing plant. (Cape Times 22nd July, 1921).

in the light of subsequent legislation. For what he advocated was nothing less than influx control, though voluntary, not imposed. He did not suggest the enforced exclusion of rural migrants from the towns, but he wanted to persuade them "to turn their hands to something useful and to make them realise the wealth lying dormant in the lands they occupy."⁽¹⁾

In his speeches President Msimang stressed the need for conciliation and moderation and for organisation "to strike heavy blows - not rebellious or violent - for a larger freedom",⁽²⁾ and these sentiments were echoed by other speakers.⁽³⁾ His presidential report, on the evening of the second day of the Conference, had some harsh references to the industrial colour bar imposed by the Government ("a club of incorrigible magnates") and white trade unions⁽⁴⁾ and to the great gap between the wages of white workers and those of black workers, the "actual workers and producers of the country's wealth", who must "decide whether to accept the challenge or ignore it, to extend the hand of fellowship or to reciprocate the insolence".⁽⁵⁾ While his references to the Israelites

1. Cape Times 23rd July, 1921.

2. Cape Times 21st July, 1921.

3. Cape Times 26th July, 1921 (especially).

4. He was also scornful of those Coloured artisans who, being admitted to white unions, were more concerned with maintaining their privileged position than with helping their own community. (Cape Times 23rd July, 1921).

5. Ibid.

show that he had no sympathy with their religious beliefs, it is apparent that he regarded them as victims of the country's land laws and the insatiable desire of European employers for cheap black labour. The burden of his speech was an indictment of white rule in South Africa, "too much greed, too much Europeanisation, too much prejudice." Yet, he asked,

"How much are we worth? Perhaps we suffer for our own sluggishness, foolishness, selfishness, and want of co-operation, self-help, and all those other virtues which go to the full sum of national progress." (1)

Criticism was reserved for the behaviour of the hot-heads in the black labour movement.

"We have been often tempted, or was it more force of circumstance and of economic difficulties, to force the issues when peaceful negotiations might have produced better and more lasting results. At such times when we might have concentrated upon organisation and mobilisation of those forces already at our disposal for the purpose of insisting upon our rights, circumstances had compelled issues which had lacked success by reason of disorganisation. There had been too many temptations to strike, and such strikes had been organised by people who were ignorant of the doctrines of Trade Unionism. These people were ignorant in regard to the great secrets of passive resistance. I will be failing in my duty if I do not warn you against the wild talk which serves merely to rouse the passion of the people; at any rate, for the present." (2)

For whom were these strictures intended? Possibly Kadalie, who had threatened strike action in the September of the year before, but unlikely, since in the same speech Msimang appealed to other unions "to throw in their lot

1. Ibid.

2. Cape Times 23rd July, 1921.

with the I.C.W.U. for the general upliftment of downtrodden races"; more likely Masabalala, who had uttered many wild words during the Port Elizabeth wage dispute and the 1921 election campaign, and whom Msimang must have had in mind in criticising the advocates of the ten shilling a day minimum wage.⁽¹⁾ At, or just before, the end of the Conference Msimang and Masabalala quarrelled, for reasons which can only be surmised. Perhaps the latter resented the tone of the presidential speeches; perhaps he was offended at not being chosen, in the new elections, for an official position in the Union, other than membership of the Supreme Executive Council; or perhaps his loyalty had been subverted by Kadalie. On the day before the Conference ended, with a session at West London on Monday 25th July, he had been received with enthusiasm by the assembled members of the I.C.U. and, in the course of a typically extravagant speech, had expressed his thanks to the I.C.U. for sending £150 after the Port Elizabeth riots to pay for his bail and "to feed the hungry". At Port Elizabeth, he said, the people had "thought it time to go to their Father, the Government for food ... The only reply they got from the Government was through machine guns, which killed 150 (sic) persons." At the same meeting Kadalie explained why he had taken no part in the I.C.W.U. Conference, "giving as the

1. Ibid.

principal reason that the I.C.U. stood for constitutionalism", ⁽¹⁾ so that there was the curious situation of each union accusing the other of lack of moderation. It must be admitted that, by acquiring the alliance of Masabalala Kadalie had relieved the I.C.W.U., which was seeking a reputation for restraint, of a most embarrassing leader. In his farewell speech at the final session of the I.C.W.U. Conference Msimang was quite explicit in his references to "some of the leaders of the people whose system and manner of speech at public meetings seemed to take up a tone that made things difficult even for the most sympathetic of our enemies to think kindly of them", a denunciation that may have been aimed equally at Kadalie and Masabalala. ⁽²⁾ He again emphasised the necessity to abandon a sterile conflict with constituted authority, to seek remedies for grievances in organisation and self-help, and to avoid "wild phrases and flowery words". ⁽³⁾

Masabalala was not alone in his defection. He took with him five other delegates from his own part of the Cape, representing Port Elizabeth, Somerset East and Willowmore.

1. Cape Times 26th July, 1921.

2. "A wise leader should think more of the dangers that might befall his people if he did not lead them safely and wisely. He should scarcely allow personal ambition to come before the sacred duty and the sacred cause he is out to win, not for himself, but for the helpless." (Cape Times 27th July, 1921).

3. Ibid. His moderate remarks were quoted with approval by a leading article in the Cape Times of 28th July, 1921.

The deserters waited upon Kadalie at the I.C.U. office to inform him of their decision to dissociate themselves from the I.C.W.U. Conference and to request the I.C.U. to convene a conference at Port Elizabeth instead.⁽¹⁾ All six, with the exception of Bennett Ncwana, who was apparently representing Somerset East, were members of the newly elected Supreme Executive Council of the I.C.W.U., one indeed being its Vice-President, J.W. Stoffels of Port Elizabeth.⁽²⁾

The competing conference was opened at Port Elizabeth on Saturday 22nd October, 1921, by a Member of the Legislative Assembly, D.M. Brown of the South African Party. Apart from South West Africa, which was unlikely to have been represented by anyone other than delegates from the I.C.U. branch at Luderitzbucht, the Cape Province alone was represented, and in fact the Port Elizabeth Conference was simply establishing a new Cape Town-Port Elizabeth axis to replace the I.C.W.U. one.⁽³⁾ The presidential address was delivered by J.G. Gumbs, who spoke with moderation about the need to organise in imitation of "the white man's practical methods".

1. Ilanga lase Natal 27th January, 1922.

2. Cape Times 26th October, 1921.

3. Ibid.

"In organising they did not aim at inflammatory propaganda, or conspiracy against the Government, but merely to combine with a view of alleviating the working conditions of the people who contributed most to production." (1)

The next day, Sunday, was the anniversary of the Port Elizabeth riot, and a procession of several thousand people, led by a band, made its way to the cemetery for a religious service. (2)

In the course of its deliberations the Conference passed resolutions calling for an end to the contract labour system, which the delegates regarded as a device used by South African Railways and Harbours and other employers for undercutting black urban labour. (3) Other resolutions demanded an investigation into the working conditions of black miners in the Transvaal and into conditions in South West Africa; called for the repeal of the pass laws and for African

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid; C. Kadalie: My Life and the I.C.U., p.51-52. "In 1921" writes Kadalie, who, however, does not refer to the Conference, "I went to Port Elizabeth and spent two months there in order to put the affairs of the union on a proper trade union footing ...". With regard to the demonstration: "In the afternoon, the demonstration moved to the Market Square in the North End of the City, where I was the chief speaker ... In view of the sad occasion we were commemorating, my speech was another denunciation of the methods employed by the police ...". He wrongly puts the demonstration on the Monday, which was actually the 24th. (He also gives two different figures for the death roll - 21 (p.51) and 23 (p.52)).

3. Cape Times 26th October, 1921.

and Coloured representation at the International Labour Conference; and condemned the practice of wine farmers in the Cape of issuing wine in lieu of wages and not giving their labourers decent accommodation. Delegates also protested at the Government's decision to confine the payment of compensation for injuries in the Port Elizabeth disturbances to those who had been permanently injured and who had not been willing spectators.⁽¹⁾

The main business of the Conference was to bring the Eastern Province into an enlarged I.C.U., a project which was nearly frustrated by differences of political policy. While the Eastern Province delegates were in favour of rendering support to the Labour Party, the Cape Town people, who had supported the South African Party in the previous election, were hostile to any commitment to the Labour Party as long as the white trade unionists, especially in the Transvaal, did not accept their common interest with the black workers. It is true that the I.C.U. was no longer attached to the South African Party and indeed Kadalie

1. Cape Times 29th October, 1921. Dr. Johns (Loc.cit., p.186), referring to the demand that the I.C.U. should be invited by the Government to represent abroad the interests of black workers in South Africa, goes on to say: "Yet, in contrast to Msimang, Kadalie seemed to place considerable importance upon possible overseas links. Thus, a new emphasis was added with the shift of leadership." In fact, however, the question of South African representation at the International Labour Conference had been raised at the Bloemfontein Conference. Dr. Johns also, of course, supposes that Kadalie "took over" the I.C.W.U. (Ibid, p.185) whereas the I.C.U. and the I.C.W.U. were quite distinct and remained so.

himself, with or without the consent of his colleagues, had already made overtures to the National Party, just before the I.C.W.U. Conference of July, when he had written to General Hertzog apparently endorsing his policies and appealing for a contribution to an I.C.U. fund for the Bulhoek victims. Hertzog's response was a donation of a guinea, accompanied by his celebrated letter, in which he spoke, in stiff and laboured terms, of "our common endeavours" and the necessity for "faith in and sympathy with one another" on the part of "the white and black Africander".⁽¹⁾ Whatever Kadalie's private views were, however, and in spite of Masabalala's enthusiasm for the Nationalists in the general election earlier in the year, majority black opinion could not yet stomach support for Hertzog, however disenchanted it was with Smuts. After protracted debate it was decided to postpone any decision upon political affiliations, though even this compromise secured only a narrow majority.⁽²⁾ The final result was a resolution that not only kept the I.C.U. clear of the Labour Party, but also was a recognition of the useful rôle of the South African Native National Congress and the African People's Organisation.

1. The letter is printed in full in C. Kadalie: Op.cit., p.58-59. The original is in the Ballinger Collection, University of Cape Town.

2. Cape Times 26th and 29th October, 1921.

"That this organisation resolves unreservedly to dissociate itself from any political body whatever, but declared that its objectives are solely to propagate the industrial, economic and social advancement of all the African workers through industrial action on constitutional lines; and it is further resolved that this Organisation does not foster or encourage antagonism towards other established bodies, political or otherwise, of African peoples, and that this resolution be inserted in the constitution of the Organisation." (1)

In the election of officers at the end of the Conference, Masabalala was given the position of Organiser-in-Chief, leaving Kadalie as Secretary. William Fife of Cape Town was elected President, while James La Guma⁽²⁾ of the Luderitz-bucht branch was transferred to Port Elizabeth as branch Secretary.⁽³⁾ It seems, however, that the Port Elizabeth and Cape Town branches remained virtually autonomous and that East London did not go in with the enlarged I.C.U.⁽⁴⁾

1. Cape Times 23rd January, 1923.

2. "Born at Bloemfontein in 1894 of French and Malagasy stock, La Guma went to work at the age of eight in Cape Town, took part in working class demonstrations in 1906, and migrated to South West Africa, where he worked on diamond diggings near Luderitz during the war." (H.J. and R.E. Simons: Op.cit., p.266-267).

3. C. Kadalie: Op.cit., p.53.

4. Imvo Zabantsundu 9th May, 1922.

At the end of the Conference the One Big Movement was in complete disarray. Not only was there the split between Msimang and Kadalie, but both were also in trouble with Congress. Kadalie was in bad odour with the Cape Congress, while Msimang had offended the national leadership by criticising the project of sending a deputation to the Pan-African Congress of the American negro leaders, Dr. Dubois.⁽¹⁾ Further confusion was caused when Bennett Ncwana, who had already defected from the I.C.W.U., now deserted the I.C.U., upon which he launched a bitter attack in The Black Man of 26th November, 1921.⁽²⁾ He threw in his lot with the I.C.W.U. and in 1922 started with its General Secretary, Nyombolo, and a self-styled professor, James S. Thaele, an African Land Settlement scheme, the object of which was "to assist the Government by inducing Natives living in towns to settle on the land".⁽³⁾ How long Msimang continued to be associated with the I.C.W.U. is uncertain. There is evidence that he was still President as late as June, 1922, but he must have relinquished control very soon afterwards.⁽⁴⁾ Nyombolo

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1. Ilanga lase Natal 2nd September, 1921.
 2. Ilanga lase Natal 20th January, 1922.
 3. A.P.O. 8th April, 1922, which expresses contempt for both the scheme and its initiators.
 4. Imvo Zabantsundu 9th May, 1922. According to Kadalie, he was expelled. (Manifesto of 9th July, 1928, B/UCT). There was an I.C.W.U. Conference at Queenstown in June, 1922. (Cape Times 27th July, 1921; Ilanga lase Natal 13th June, 1924) Msimang took up residence in Johannesburg, where he became a member of the Joint Council of Europeans and Natives. By then his newspaper had ceased publication and he was in business with another member of the Johannesburg Joint Council, R.V. Selope Thema. (Umteteli wa Bantu 13th March, 1924, where there is a reference to "Messrs. Thema and Msimang, General Agents, Brokers, etc.").

was the dominant figure in the Union during its declining years. He ran a newspaper called the African Voice.

Early in 1923 there was talk of a move to bring together the I.C.U. and the I.C.W.U., and it was even reported that a reunion had been effected.⁽¹⁾ But in September, 1923, the African Voice resumed the offensive, accusing Kadalie of being in the pay of Moscow, a charge that was indignantly repudiated.⁽²⁾ In later years Kadalie alleged that the rival Union had been financed by "the exploiters of our people",⁽³⁾ by which he presumably meant the Chamber of Mines or the South African Party. Certainly anti-Communism and a servile support of the S.A.P. seem to have been cardinal features of later I.C.W.U. policy.⁽⁴⁾

At the Fourth Annual Conference of the I.C.U., held in January, 1924, Kadalie pressed for the name of his Union to be changed to the African Workers' Federation because

"certain individuals have adopted and styled their union (sic) as the I.C.W.U., a name associated and derived from (sic) that of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of Africa - the I.C.U. This union, I.C.W.U., which is at present non-existent, is now used for purposes of exploitation of the African workers." ⁽⁵⁾

The proposal met with a hostile reception and he was compelled to withdraw it.

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1. Umteteli wa Bantu 14th and 21st April and 19th May, 1923.
 2. Imvo Zabantsundu 9th October, 1923.
 3. Manifesto of 9th July, 1928 (B/UCT).
 4. A.P.O. 8th April, 1922; Umteteli wa Bantu 22nd September, 1924.
 5. The East London Daily Dispatch 25th January, 1924.

The "non-existent" union held its annual conference at Grahamstown in July of the same year. Judging from the subject-matter of its deliberations, one would guess that it had some support among railway workers. Typically the Conference passed resolutions expressing loyalty to the King and "great alarm and consternation" at the spread of Bolshevism.⁽¹⁾ Later that year the I.C.W.U. followed the I.C.U. into Natal, when the latter began its propaganda there;⁽²⁾ and there is evidence of its existence as late as 1925, when Nyombolo, still General Secretary with an office in Cape Town, was endeavouring to persuade the City Council to co-operate in the establishment of an Employment Bureau.⁽³⁾ When the newspapers associated with Nyombolo and Ncwana disappeared is not clear, but they evidently had gone bankrupt by 1927.⁽⁴⁾ In 1925, the I.C.W.U. made its last recorded appearance,⁽⁵⁾ at a time when the I.C.U. was poised for its period of great expansion. Therefore, even though Ncwana and Nyombolo do not yet disappear from the story, their Union can now safely be presumed dead.

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1. Umteteli wa Bantu 26th July and 9th August, 1924.
 2. Ilanga lase Natal 24th October, 1924.
 3. The Council declined. Nyombolo was under suspicion for misuse of funds collected for (possibly) the prosecution of a European farmer at Standerton who had imposed such a savage punishment upon a black girl that she had died. (H.D. Tyamzashe to Editor, The Star, undated, F 1927/142; Cape Archives: City of Cape Town, Minutes of the Meetings of the Native Affairs Committee, Volume I, Parcel 107, Item 338).
 4. H.D. Tyamzashe to Editor, The Star, undated, F 1927/142.
 5. P.A. Silburn: South Africa: White and Black - or Brown? (London, 1927) speaks of the I.C.W.U. as still active at that date. "The I.C.W.U. is a rival of the I.C.U., also in the hands of communist agents (sic)," (p.93).

CHAPTER III

The Organisation and Policy of the Early I.C.U., 1919-1925.

"The Industrial and Commercial Union (I.C.U.). This is a society which operates chiefly in the larger centres of the Cape Province. It aims apparently at uniting the Native workers into some trade union combination, but up to the present has only been moderately successful. Its leaders ... make inflammatory speeches from time to time and are active in deputations to Ministers, but so far there has been nothing which has necessitated police action. The society is making some headway with the Natives but suffers from the fact that several of its leaders are foreign-born Natives. It conducts a newspaper whose tone is, for the most part, anti-European."

(Report of the Native Churches Commission, 1925).

There seems to be no extant copy of the original Constitution of the I.C.U. All that survives is a fragment.

"The objects of this Union shall be to protect and regulate the conditions of work in the trade; to promote the general and material welfare of the members of the Union; to co-operate with workers of other callings for the advancement of the whole working class." (1)

This corresponds to a passage in the rules of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, A.F. Batty's union.

"The objects for which the Society is established are ... to protect and regulate the conditions of labour in the trades in the last clause mentioned ... to promote the general and material welfare of its members ... to aid by federation other societies which do not come under the preamble of our rules, and other trade societies having for the objects, or one of them, the promotion of the interests of workmen ..." (2)

It is curious that the framers of the I.C.U. Constitution, faced with the inapplicable in the trades in the last clause mentioned, should choose to put simply in the trade, when the Union was open to "all persons employed in industry or commerce."⁽³⁾ This seems to suggest that, in spite of its name, the Industrial and Commercial Union was originally confined to a single trade, viz. (if the term trade is appropriate in this case) stevedoring, and that only in subsequent months did it open its doors to men in other occupations.

1. Cape Times 9th October, 1919.

2. Amalgamated Society of Engineers: Rules as Revised at the Fourteenth Delegate Meeting Held at Manchester, 1915 (London, 1915) Rule 1 - Name, Objects and Constitution (3).

3. Cape Times 9th October, 1919. It was open to persons "irrespective of race, colour or creed". (Cape Times 10th January, 1920).

Perhaps the proclaimed intention of seeking co-operation with workers of other callings lends support to this inference.

The remainder of the Constitution must have been a simplified version of the long and detailed Rule Book of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers.⁽¹⁾ This surmise is supported by the comment made by Tom Mann, the veteran English trade unionist who opened the 1923 I.C.U. Conference.

"He had looked carefully over the rules of their Union, and he found that they correspond in nearly every particular with the rules of unions that he had been closely connected with for more than 40 years of his life, and he must express his very agreeable surprise at finding such efficiency shown. He hoped they would excuse his putting it that way. He did not expect to find rules drafted so clearly, the objects stated so explicitly, and that their organisation should be of such a definite and practical character as

1. This runs to 227 pages compared with the 18 pages of the I.C.U.'s Constitution (The Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of Africa: 1925 Revised Constitution; as Amended by Conference at Johannesburg, 1925, Cape Town, 1925).

"their rule-book showed it to be." (1)

The only known amendment to the original Constitution was the addition of the Union's resolution, passed by the Port Elizabeth Conference of October, 1921,

"to dissociate itself from any political body whatever, but ... solely to propagate the industrial, economic and social advancement of all the African workers through industrial action on constitutional lines, and ... not foster or encourage antagonism towards other established bodies, political or otherwise, of African peoples ..." (2)

1. Cape Times 18th January, 1923. There is no evidence that the original Constitution contained a preamble based upon that of the constitution of the Industrial Workers of the World. E. Roux: Time Longer than Rope (p.400): "The first constitution of the I.C.U. was written for Kadavie by a Cape Marxist and modelled on the constitution of the Industrial Workers of the World." S.W. Johns III: Trade union, political pressure group, or mass movement? The Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of Africa (In R.I. Rotberg and A.A. Mazrui, eds.: Protest and Power in Black Africa, New York, 1970) accepts without question (or evidence other than Roux) that the original Constitution of the I.C.U. did include a preamble borrowed from the I.W.W., but, unable to believe that "left-wing militant socialists, who later became Communists" had anything to do with the I.C.U. in its formative period, suggests that it was the work of A.F. Batty (note 1, p.706). This is implausible. That the preamble was a later addition is borne out by a reference in Umteteli wa Bantu 19th January, 1924: "We do not find fault with its Constitution, and we are in direct sympathy with its avowed objects ..." Undoubtedly Umteteli, financed by the Chamber of Mines, would have found fault with it had it contained the famous preamble. Cf. also The Natal Witness 26th November, 1927: "Some five months ago The Natal Witness drew public attention for the first time to the now famous preamble to the Revised Constitution of the I.C.U. ... We pointed out that this attitude was a complete reversal of the policy set forth in previous issues of the I.C.U. Constitution, which aimed only at reasonable and legitimate activities for the betterment of the native."

2. Cape Times 23rd January, 1923.

Measures to "promote the general and material welfare of the members" included death benefit, which was paid to the family of a deceased member, but evidently not sickness, unemployment or old-age benefit. The only other material advantage in being a member was to enjoy moral and legal support in disputes with employers. The I.C.U. is known to have taken up individual grievances,⁽¹⁾ having on occasion recourse to legal action.⁽²⁾ Once, however, the cost of living began to decline and unemployment to appear there were no more negotiations for wage increases until the end of 1924, when the Union, by then established in Bloemfontein, started an agitation there for improved pay for African labourers.⁽³⁾

In the early days of the I.C.U., when it did not extend beyond the Cape Peninsula, Kadalie, as Secretary, was the only paid official, the servant of an unpaid General Executive

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1. "Two accidents occurred on board the German steamer *Muusa* on Saturday morning, September 15th, 1923. At No. 2 hatch Brother Elias Liederman, who is a foreman and also shop steward of the I.C.U. was hurt ... Shortly afterwards at No. 5 hatch ... a fatal accident occurred ... We regret to state that Brother Phillip Lewis, whose period of membership in the I.C.U. was of six weeks' duration, will not be entitled to burial benefit, according to our Constitution, however, the Union will fight for compensation on behalf of his widow ..." (The Workers' Herald 25th September, 1923). At this period members were styled brothers; only from 1925 were they called comrades.
 2. For example, on behalf of sixteen abattoir workers in Cape Town in 1925. (The Workers' Herald 2nd April, 1925).
 3. The Workers' Herald 15th May, 1925.

Council, presided over by a Chairman or President, the members of which were elected by the annual conference. After the amalgamation with the Port Elizabeth Union there were more paid officials - a General Secretary, Kadalie; an Organiser-in-Chief, Masabalala; and, from 1923, an Assistant General Secretary, La Guma, the former branch secretary at Port Elizabeth, who was moved thence in 1924, at Kadalie's insistence, to Cape Town, where his function evidently was to do the office work while his chief made propaganda tours.⁽¹⁾ In December of 1924 Masabalala was dismissed, following complaints from the East London and King William's Town branches, for "negligence and carelessness", for "falling into his old bad habit of spoiling the work done by others", whatever that meant.⁽²⁾ The number of salaried officers, at least at the Head Office, was reduced, therefore, to two. These paid officials at the head of the organisation, together with the General President and the Assistant General President, were ex officio members of the Board of Arbitration, a sort of inner cabinet, responsible in the first instance to the General Executive Council.⁽³⁾

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1. Cape Times 26th February, 1924; The Workers' Herald 15th May, 1925. La Guma's move was resisted at first by the General President and the majority of the General Executive Council. Perhaps they thought that the addition of an Assistant General Secretary at Head Office was something of a luxury.
 2. The Workers' Herald 9th January and 15th May, 1925. He evidently occupied himself with the affairs of Congress. In 1929 he joined the staff of its paper Abantu-Batho. (T.D. Mveli-Skota: Op.cit.).
 3. Imvo Zababtsundu 9th October, 1923.

At the branch level there were elected secretaries, ⁽¹⁾ who were responsible to their branch executives, at least in theory. Some branch secretaries were paid, but it is impossible to tell how many. Port Elizabeth had a salaried secretary and also, as early as 1923, a full-time shop steward, cum-organiser. ⁽²⁾ The function of the shop steward generally seems to have been merely the collection of subscriptions. The 1925 Constitution provided for the payment of a commission to them. ⁽³⁾ Some branches were grouped into districts under district secretaries. De Aar was the centre of a district and Kimberley the centre of another, Griqualand West. ⁽⁴⁾ The Witwatersrand branches were also grouped together and had a district executive council. ⁽⁵⁾

In the beginning the branches, which enjoyed a large measure of autonomy, managed their own funds, only remitting a capitation fee to the Head Office. "Our experiences", wrote the General Secretary in 1928,

"showed that Branch Secretaries abused this privilege and in many cases Branch Executives were treated with contempt by the latter (sic), and as a result funds were misused at Port Elizabeth, etc. When the case of the Port Elizabeth (sic) was heard in the Supreme Court, I remember being severely cross examined

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1. Ilanga lase Natal 27th January, 1922.
 2. The Workers' Herald 25th September, 1923.
 3. Section 16 - Branch Administration Regulations, (o) and (p).
 4. Imvo Zabantsundu 9th October, 1923; The Workers' Herald 2nd April, 1925; T.D. Mveli-Skota: Op.cit.
 5. The Workers' Herald 15th May, 1925.

"by the Jury on our system of allowing Branches to control their own funds without check by Head Office. It was also suggested by the learned judge that centralisation of funds should be immediately considered by our National Council."(1)

Such an arrangement was adopted at the Annual Conference of January, 1924, held at East London, though it was implemented in the teeth of branch opposition.(2)

Kadalie was referring to the case of Alfred Sidzumo, the branch secretary (in succession to La Guma) at Port Elizabeth, who was tried in March, 1923, on a charge of stealing £149.6s.,(3) and implied that the problem was simply one of instituting adequate checks upon outlying officials. In point of fact the Cape Town office was itself lax in its financial administration, at least until the advent of James La Guma. A month after Sidzumo had been suspended for negligence and dishonesty, in July, 1922, a Cape Town magistrate, trying a Coloured man on a charge of embezzling £27 belonging to the I.C.U., could not bring himself to impose a punishment more severe than a suspended prison term because of "the rather lax manner in which the affairs of this Society had been conducted. One felt sorry for the

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1. Manifesto of 9th July, 1928 (B/UCT). "National Council" is an anachronism.
 2. Ibid; The Workers' Herald 15th May, 1925.
 3. South African Law Reports (1928) Eastern Districts Local Division (1923 E.D.L.: Rex v. Sidzumo, p.231. Evidently the I.C.U. lost the case because later in 1923 Sidzumo sued the Union for £96 arrears of salary, including £8 in lieu of notice. (Port Elizabeth Advertiser 27th October, 1923).

ordinary members of this Union, because their officials appeared to have been rather regardless of the doctrine of meum and tuum in this matter ..."(1)

Until 1923 the I.C.U. was essentially a Cape organisation. At its Conference of January, 1923, all thirty delegates came from the Cape Province with the exception of one from South West Africa. The three major branches in the first years were Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and East London. Kadalie has it that the East London branch was founded by himself,⁽²⁾ but there must have been a certain continuity between it and the old pre-I.C.U. organisation there, the East London Native Employees' Association. Theo. B. Lujiza, who assisted Kadalie in founding (or reviving) the branch and became its secretary in 1922, had been secretary of the earlier body.⁽³⁾ The other Cape branches were Simonstown and Langebaan (1920);⁽⁴⁾ Somerset East, Willowmore and De Aar (1921);⁽⁵⁾ Touws River, Mossel Bay, Upington and Loerie (1923);⁽⁶⁾ Kimberley, Retreat and King William's Town (1924);⁽⁷⁾ and Adelaide, Cathcart

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1. Cape Times 14th and 19th August, 1922.
 2. C. Kadalie: My Life and the I.C.U., p.53-55.
 3. T.D. Mweli-Skota: Op.cit.
 4. Union of South Africa: Social Statistics No. 3; Cape Times 30th August, 1920.
 5. Ilanga lase Natal 27th January, 1922; Cape Times 2nd August, 1921.
 6. The Workers' Herald 21st July and 25th September, 1923.
 7. The Workers' Herald 2nd April and 15th May, 1925; The East London Daily Dispatch 25th January, 1925. King William's Town was opened by Lujiza early in 1924.

and Bedford (1925).⁽¹⁾ There was probably a branch also at Humansdorp.⁽²⁾ Outside the Cape Province there was the isolated branch in South West Africa, at Luderitzbucht, founded in 1919, an establishment which permitted the I.C.U. to claim subsequently that it had branches "throughout the Union and South West Africa." No other branch in that territory is heard of and even this one seems to have been feeble.⁽³⁾

In January, 1923, the I.C.U. Conference meeting in Cape Town decided upon a nation-wide publicity campaign to induce Africans "to organise themselves into one Big Union movement, with a view to protect (sic) our people".⁽⁴⁾ Perhaps it was a sign of its expanded ambition that it was at this time that the I.C.U. started calling itself the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of Africa, no longer just of South Africa. An important feature of the publicity campaign was the foundation of the I.C.U. newspaper, The Workers' Herald, which began publication in May, 1923.

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1. Adelaide was started in January, 1925. (The Workers' Herald 20th February, 1925) and the other two probably at much the same time.
 2. Cape Times 20th January, 1923. There was possibly also a branch at Hankey. (Ibid). Social Statistics No. 4 gives a total of twelve branches, but does not list them. C. Kadalie: My Life and the I.C.U., p.55 says there were seventeen branches in January, 1923.
 3. The Workers' Herald 21st July, 1923; Union of South Africa: Report of the Administrator of South-West Africa for the Year 1924 (U.G. 33 - 1925), p.27.
 4. Cape Times 22nd and 23rd January, 1923.

Kadalie had in mind, to use his expression, an invasion of the mines, and he publicly said so at an open-air meeting at the time of the 1923 Conference.⁽¹⁾ There is evidence that he invited (though none that the invitation was accepted) the Transvaal Native Mine Clerks' Association to participate in the Conference.⁽²⁾ However, it was not the Transvaal and the mines, but the Orange Free State that was invaded first. At Bloemfontein, in response to a local invitation, Kadalie, paying his first visit since the Conference of July, 1920, set up, in August, 1923, a branch with J.B. Mancoe as branch secretary. In 1924 Keable 'Mote, a Basuto, was recruited, subsequently one of the best-known and most colourful leaders of the I.C.U.⁽³⁾ It is quite likely that a branch was established in Basutoland under the influence of the Orange Free State, sometime in 1923, because a delegate from the Protectorate was reported as having attended the Conference of January, 1924.⁽⁴⁾

If 1923 saw the I.C.U. starting up in the Free State, the Transvaal and Natal awaited the more vigorous campaign of extension that was inaugurated by the Fourth East London Conference of January, 1924, which resolved,

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1. Cape Times 18th January, 1923.
 2. Cape Times 10th January, 1923.
 3. The Workers' Herald 25th September, 1923.
 4. Cape Times 10th January, 1924.

"that an officer or officers be dispatched to tour the Union of South Africa, including the various Protectorates and Rhodesia, immediately for the purpose of organising African mine workers and labour in general, and that each branch contribute in proportion to its financial strength towards the expenses attached to the mission." (1)

The 1924 Conference was also named the First African Labour Congress and invitations to attend it were extended (though it is doubtful whether any accepted) to "kindred labour, social and economic organisations".⁽²⁾ The intention was to set up an African Labour Federation based upon the I.C.U.⁽³⁾ In his unsuccessful attempt to change the name of his Union Kadalie made the point that its existing one did not sufficiently indicate the I.C.U.'s comprehensive nature as the organisation for all African workers, skilled and unskilled. Clearly, too, he wanted to bring in the word African somehow or other.⁽⁴⁾

The outcome of the East London resolution was a tour made by Kadalie from June to November, 1924. In his annual report presented to the Conference of April, 1925, he claimed the establishment of twelve new branches since the preceding conference. His tour took him first, at the end of July, to Durban,⁽⁵⁾ where, in the face of the prevalent apathy,⁽⁶⁾

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1. The East London Daily Dispatch 25th January, 1924; Cape Times 26th February, 1924; The Workers' Herald 15th May, 1925.
 2. The Workers' Herald 22nd October, 1923.
 3. The East London Daily Dispatch 25th January, 1924; Cape Times 10th January, 1924.
 4. The East London Daily Dispatch 25th January, 1924.
 5. The Workers' Herald 15th May, 1925; C. Kadalie: My Life and the I.C.U., p.61, which wrongly dates his arrival as the middle of July.
 6. "I must admit", he says, "that my first impressions of Durban and the Zulu people were very disappointing. All seemed to be so tame and ready to submit to anything the official European suggested to them." (C. Kadalie: My Life and the I.C.U., p.62).

he succeeded in founding a branch, entrusting it to Alex P. Maduna, who had been recommended to him by J.T. Gumede of the African National Congress.⁽¹⁾ The General Secretary had to contend not merely with Zulu indifference, but also with white opposition. The municipal authorities refused to give him permission to hold public meetings, and it was only through the assistance of a European sympathiser, Mrs. Mabel Palmer, who was able to arrange for Kadalie to see the British Colonial Secretary, J.H. Thomas, then in South Africa at the head of the visiting Empire Parliamentary Delegation, that the ban was removed, though only temporarily.⁽²⁾ In September he moved to Johannesburg, where, assisted no doubt by the publicity he had acquired in Durban,⁽³⁾ he met with more rapid success than he had done in Natal. As in Bloemfontein, local enthusiasts had already started a branch,⁽⁴⁾ and soon afterwards other branches were started at Roodepoort and Benoni.⁽⁵⁾ Although Kadalie aroused some suspicion in official quarters, Europeans generally displayed little interest in what was going on.

1. Ibid, p.65: The Workers' Herald 15th May, 1925.

2. C. Kadalie: My Life, p.62-64; The Workers' Herald 15th May and 15th June, 1925.

3. C. Kadalie: My Life, p.66.

4. They included Stanley Silwana and Thomas Mbeki. (E. and W. Roux: Op.cit., p.35).

5. The Workers' Herald 9th January and 2nd April, 1925.

The following branches sent delegates to the Fifth Annual Conference, held at Johannesburg in April, 1925:-

Cape Province: Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London, King William's Town, Adelaide, Bedford, Somerset East, Kimberley, Cathcart, Retreat.

Orange Free State: Bloemfontein.

Natal: Durban.

Transvaal: Johannesburg, Benoni, Pretoria.

(15 branches in all, 10 of them in the Cape).⁽¹⁾

If these branches are added to the list that were too small or poor or inactive to send delegates to Johannesburg - De Aar, Humansdorp, Langebaan, Loerie, Luderitzbucht, Mossel Bay, Retreat, Roodepoort, Simonstown, Touws River, Upington, and Willowmore - there is a total of 27 branches, 20 in the Cape. But in point of fact De Aar certainly and the others probably had lapsed, though six of them - Simonstown, De Aar, Touws River, Mossel Bay, Retreat and Humansdorp - were later revived. Branches did tend to wax and wane. Describing in his annual report for 1924 a tour made by himself and Masabalala, Kadalie spoke of the resuscitation of branches "that were nearly at their exit".⁽²⁾

Naturally, with all these new and widely scattered branches, the membership of the I.C.U. was very mixed. For most of its existence the I.C.U. had its staunch following

1. The Workers' Herald 15th May, 1925.

2. Ibid. De Aar resisted resuscitation in 1924 (Ibid) and Kadalie's visit to Upington was not attended by much success (C. Kadalie: My Life and the I.C.U., p.69-70).

among the Cape Town stevedores.⁽¹⁾ Apparently, however, it soon lost the support of the contract dockworkers who lived in the Docks Location.⁽²⁾ This is not surprising, if only because they were contract workers. Unlike the stevedores they had not shared in the all-round wage increase of September, 1920, and towards the end of 1922 they even had their wages reduced,⁽³⁾ because the Government wanted to discourage the movement of black labour into Cape Town, where there was much unemployment. A fairly substantial and loyal following was found among railway workers, though Kadalie's claim of August, 1920, that there was a railway branch "in every centre, both great and small, throughout the whole system of the Union"⁽⁴⁾ must be treated with reserve. The I.C.U. members of De Aar and Touws River branches were

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1. The Workers' Herald 25th September, 1925 and 28th April, 1926.
 2. "The Natives at the docks," said a Cape Town official (John Gomas) at the 1926 Conference, "were doing hard work ... One day I impressed on these men that now was the time to demand higher wages, but unfortunately they were not members of the I.C.U. as yet." (The Workers' Herald 28th April, 1926).
 3. Married men were brought down to 4s.-4s.6d. a day, single men to 4s.-4s.3d. a day and new men were to start at 3s.6d., rising to 4s. (Cape Archives: Minutes of Native Affairs Committee, City of Cape Town, Vol. I, Parcel 107, Item 338, Interview between the Minister of Railways and Harbours and the Mayor, Chairman of the Native Township Committee and Town Clerk 23rd March, 1923).
 4. Cape Times 30th August, 1920.

railway men and so were a good many of the East London members. Another considerable group was made up of agricultural workers in the Eastern Province. Adelaide, Bedford, Somerset East, Cathcart and King William's Town must have been branches with a strong, or even predominant, agricultural membership.⁽¹⁾ Otherwise there were all sorts, unskilled workers in every type of employment - laundry workers,⁽²⁾ employees of the oil companies,⁽³⁾ municipal labourers,⁽⁴⁾ domestic servants and miscellaneous factory workers. On the Rand, although the I.C.U. made some converts among mine workers, chiefly, it would seem, among mine employees living outside the compounds,⁽⁵⁾ and although the iniquities of the recruiting system became a staple of conference denunciation, there seems to be no evidence for assuming significant penetration of that semi-enclosed and largely impermanent labour force. The fact that the I.C.U. Conference of April, 1926, resolved upon "special efforts ... to organise mine workers"⁽⁶⁾ would indicate that, in its eighteen months existence on the Rand, the Union had made little progress in winning them over.

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1. Cf. The Workers' Herald 2nd April and 15th May, 1925.
 2. Minutes of the National Council November, 1927 (F 1927/124), p.14.
 3. At least in Cape Town (Interview with Mr. Gomas 18th May, 1970).
 4. The Workers' Herald 2nd April, 1925.
 5. C. Kadalie: My Life and the I.C.U., p.72; The Workers' Herald 27th May, 1926; Minutes of the National Council November, 1927, p.16.
 6. The Workers' Herald 28th April, 1926.

It is easier to discover what sort of people joined the I.C.U. than to determine how many of them there were at any one time. At the end of 1921 the Union had a claimed membership of 10,004.⁽¹⁾ Early in 1924 Kadalie was claiming 20,000⁽²⁾ and this was before the movement into Natal and the Transvaal. A more detailed estimate of membership is available for September, 1925, as follows:- Cape Town and Cape Peninsula 6,000; Johannesburg and the Reef 5,000; Port Elizabeth and Suburbs 2,000; East London 3,000; King William's Town 1,500; Bloemfontein 1,000; Durban 600; Kimberley 300; other small branches 11,000; total 30,400.⁽³⁾ The I.C.U. itself admitted that half this claimed membership was behind in the payment of subscriptions,⁽⁴⁾ but even a total of 15,200 of regularly contributing members seems inflated. The most suspect figure is 11,000 for "other small branches", of which there were, so far as can be ascertained, only fourteen,⁽⁵⁾ and the continued existence of five of these is in doubt.⁽⁶⁾ It is impossible

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1. Union of South Africa: Social Statistics No. 4 of 1922, p.88.
 2. Umteteli wa Bantu 5th April, 1924.
 3. E. Gitsham and J.F. Trembath: A First Account of Labour Organisation in South Africa (Durban, 1926), p.125.
 4. Ibid, p.125.
 5. Adelaide, Bedford, Somerset East, Cathcart, Pretoria, Langebaan, De Aar, Willowmore, Touws River, Mossel Bay, Upington, Loerie, Luderitzbucht and Humansdorp.
 6. Langebaan, Willowmore, Upington, Loerie and Luderitzbucht.

to believe that these had a combined membership of 11,000 or even 5,500 "financial members". It would be astonishing if they had more than a thousand members altogether. Unlikely also is it that Cape Town and the Cape Peninsula (i.e. Cape Town, Retreat and Simonstown, assuming that the last-named was functioning at the time) had 6,000 members, or 3,000 in financial standing. At the very most the Cape Town branch had 1,000 members during the dock strike of December, 1919⁽¹⁾ and 2,500 after the strike.⁽²⁾ On the other hand, Cape Town in 1925 did have an energetic organiser, John Gomas, who no doubt had, by September of that year, added to the local membership. As for the Rand, 2,500 financial members do not seem excessive. For there is an independent estimate of over a thousand at the beginning of 1925.⁽³⁾ A total of 1,000 regular members for Port Elizabeth is not unreasonable, if Masabalala's union had as many as 4,000 in 1920,⁽⁴⁾ while later evidence supports the 1,500 paying members for East London, high as such a figure appears.⁽⁵⁾ A consideration of the available evidence leads to an estimate - a generous one - of a paying membership of the order of ten thousand by mid-1925, two-thirds belonging to Cape branches.

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1. Cape Times 9th October, 1919; The Cape Argus 19th December, 1919.
 2. Cape Times 30th August, 1920.
 3. The International, quoted in The Workers' Herald 9th January, 1925.
 4. Union of South Africa: Report of the Commissioners, etc., p.3.
 5. General Secretary's Report of Inspection of Branches 6th March, 1926 (F 1926/6).

Although it is possible to arrive at a membership of ten thousand by subjecting to scrutiny the numbers claimed by the I.C.U., it remains difficult to accept. A membership of that order would have given an annual income of £13,000 at a subscription rate of sixpence a week for each member, which was the contribution for male industrial workers fixed by the Revised Constitution of 1925.⁽¹⁾ Circumstantial evidence, however, indicates that the Union was operating on an exiguous budget even late in 1924 after the Rand had been opened. When Kadalie made his 1924 tour, he was stranded at Upington without enough money to buy himself a meal.⁽²⁾ "In the earlier days of the I.C.U.", he declared in December, 1927, "he had starved his family and worked without a salary for two years".⁽³⁾ Allowance must be made for exaggeration, but there are few signs of affluence in the I.C.U. before late 1926. The spasmodic appearance of The Workers' Herald is another piece of evidence. Although the intention was apparently to publish this fortnightly,⁽⁴⁾ at its most regular and most frequent it was never more than a monthly and, indeed, up to 1925 it appeared only irregularly. There were only ten issues between May, 1923, and December, 1924, and only four of these came out in 1924.

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1. Section 4 - Enrolment Fees. The contribution for female industrial workers was threepence, for agricultural workers of both sexes also threepence. At this period, although a large number of members was no doubt made up of women and farm workers, the movement was predominantly urban and male.
 2. C. Kadalie: My Life and the I.C.U., p.69-70.
 3. The Workers' Herald 18th January, 1928.
 4. The Workers' Herald 21st July, 1923.

However, even if one suspects that the inflow of new members was matched, perhaps not by an outflow of old ones, at least by a reluctance of newcomers to persevere in the payment of their dues, one cannot deny that the I.C.U. grew in membership as it expanded geographically. It is necessary, therefore, to find an explanation for the success of the I.C.U. in establishing itself in new parts of the country in the months following the Cape Town and East London Conferences, when, not only was fresh ground broken in the other provinces, but even in the Cape new branches were opened in the Eastern Province by the energetic Lujiza.

An influence on the growth of the movement was the improved economic situation of the country from about 1923. After the wartime "price boom" broke in mid-1920 South Africa entered a brief depression that reached its deepest point in March, 1922, when there was a general strike on the Witwatersrand.⁽¹⁾ Recovery, when it came, lasted until 1929, when the country fell victim to the international depression.⁽²⁾ However, while improving employment opportunities for Africans in the towns would tend to favour the growth of the I.C.U., there is, perhaps, a danger of attaching too much importance to an increasing Gross National Product. If new job opportunities were created, more people - poor whites as well as blacks - were making their way into the towns to take

1. L. Katzen: Gold and the South African Economy (Cape Town, 1964), p.74.

2. Ibid, p.76.

advantage of them, and the obstacles to black trade unionism remained - the vast reserves of unused labour, the illiteracy, indifference and instability of the labour force and the hostility of employers and Government. There were, indeed, instances of labour shortage - in the Durban docks in 1923, in the gold mining industry almost all the time - but they did not stimulate so much the workers to organise as the recruiters to cast around for additional supplies - on their own terms.⁽¹⁾ Above all there was no longer the pressure exerted during the wartime boom of the continuous rise of prices that urged men to desperate remedies, to jeopardise employment for the sake of securing a tolerable wage.

In all probability the growth of the I.C.U. owed most to the fact that it came to be the focus of African and Coloured discontent, eclipsing other pressure groups in popular favour. Although it always disclaimed any intention of usurping the functions of other bodies and insisted that it was an industrial, not a political, organisation, the I.C.U. was inevitably drawn into politics because, once the cost of living had markedly declined, the grievances of its members and sympathisers were largely political: the pass laws, the industrial colour bar, the inequitable incidence of taxation and distribution of government expenditure and so forth. British experience indicated that the strength of general unions depended upon three factors, (i) a firm

1. Cape Times 16th July, 1923.

base in large industries or undertakings, (ii) recognition by employers, and (iii) occasional strikes.⁽¹⁾ The I.C.U. fell short in all three. It never ^enjoyed recognition; its 1919 strike was never matched; and its firm base in the Cape Town docks was too narrow to support a nation-wide organisation. To stick its growing heterogeneous membership together politics was the only cement. There was some justice in the charge made by Umteteli wa Bantu in 1924 that the I.C.U. leaders were "professional politicians."⁽²⁾

The increasingly political character of the I.C.U. posed for it two problems, its relationship with the South African Native National Congress (from 1923, the African National Congress) and its attitude towards the white political parties. There can be little doubt that the fortunes of the African National Congress were at a low ebb at this time. Apart altogether from a basic difference of attitude between the Cape Province and the other provinces on the questions of the franchise and the pass laws,⁽³⁾ there were divisions at provincial level. The Cape National Congress had a considerable following in the vicinity of Cape Town, where its president, ~~Mahabane~~, lived, but in the Eastern Cape it encountered the rivalry of the Bantu Union, the President of which was Meshach Pelem and Vice-President Dr. Rubasana.

1. E.J. Hobsbawn: Labouring Men; Studies in the History of Labour (London, 1964), p.187, 189.

2. Quoted in The Cape Mercury 26th June, 1924.

3. P. Walshe: Op.cit., p.224.

Relations between the latter and the National Congress were usually strained⁽¹⁾ and an attempt in 1920 to effect a union between the two was a failure.⁽²⁾ In Natal there was a split between Durban (Rev. J.L. Dube) and Pietermaritzburg (Chief Mini and J.T. Gumede).⁽³⁾ Even at branch levels there were squabbles,⁽⁴⁾ and there had been financial scandals.⁽⁵⁾ At the national level the organisation seemed bankrupt of policy.

"The African National Congress is a back number. It is an effete institution, and its influence is all behind it. It has lost what repute it once enjoyed, and it stands today as a monument to the jealousy and dissension which have been responsible for its disintegration ..."(6)

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1. The Bantu Union was bitterly attacked by the organ of the S.A.N.N.C., Abantu-Batho, in its issue of 22nd April, 1920.
 2. Imvo Zabantsundu 15th June, 1920. At its Conference in Queenstown in May, 1920, the Cape Native National Congress "after some discussion ... arrived at the opinion that the Bantu Union was nothing but a farce ..." (Central Archives: Department of Justice 3/127/20, C.I.D., Johannesburg to Secretary, South African Police 28th May, 1920).
 3. P. Walshe: Op.cit., p.228-230; C. Kadalie: My Life, p.64.
 4. Cape Town branch in 1924 suffered disruption. (Cape Archives: City of Cape Town, Minutes of Meetings of Native Affairs Committee, Report of Dr. Loram on enquiry into certain complaints against Mr. G.P. Cook, Superintendent of N'dabeni Location, 1927, Vol. II, Parcel 107, Item 339).
 5. Ilanga lase Natal 24th October, 1924.
 6. Umteteli wa Bantu quoted The Cape Mercury 26th June, 1924.

Such was the view of a censorious critic in 1924, but scathing too were the comments of Selby Msimang, who cannot be considered an unfriendly critic. "You will admit", he wrote to the editor of Ilanga lase Natal in the same year,

"that criticism is good and that no existing organisation deserves more of it than the Native National Congress - an organisation which has since its inception followed with a sickening persistence a single line of action, i.e. the passing of beautifully worded and pious resolutions on almost all aspects of the problems with which the Bantu have to grapple - the same resolutions each year repeated with remarkable regularity with the result that they have long lost not the necessary force alone, but have even ceased to be taken seriously, if ever they were; and the leaders who have become experts in drawing them up have (sic) themselves about to lose, if they have not lost, the respect and hearing they should command ... In conclusion let me assure you that the cause of the Native National Congress is a sacred one with me. I write and criticise its leaders without malice but with an ardent desire to improve things ..." (1)

After their deterioration in 1920, when Simon Jordan was the branch secretary in N'dabeni, the I.C.U.'s relations with Congress in the Western Province improved with the accession to the Union some time in 1923 of J.S. Thaele, the President of the Cape National Congress. In other respects, however, he was a dubious gain, because he was also associated with the militant black organisation, the Universal Negro Improvement Society of Marcus Garvey, a body whose aims were incompatible with the basic I.C.U. striving (for all the rebuffs the Union suffered) for a

1. Ilanga lase Natal 13th June, 1924.

single multi-racial South African society and for the solidarity of the working class. However, although a number of I.C.U. members besides Thaele came under the spell of Garvey and belonged to his organisation, which had a branch in Cape Town among other places, its influence on the I.C.U. was only marginal.⁽¹⁾

In the Transvaal, when it commenced operations there in September, 1924, the I.C.U. had a mixed reception from Congress officials. Although Makgatho, still President of the national organisation, was entirely hostile and R.V. Selope-Thema, the General Secretary, unhelpful, some of the officials were friendly, notably Mvabasa, Mabaso and Ngcayita.⁽²⁾ In Natal also the reception was mixed, though in no case hostile. It was the President of the Natal African Congress, J.T. Gumede, that issued Kadalie with an invitation to start work in that province and gave him every assistance when he arrived at Durban.⁽³⁾ On the other hand, the newspaper of the Rev. John Dube, Ilanga lase Natal, gave the I.C.U. a more cautious, but not an unfriendly, welcome.⁽⁴⁾

In white politics the debate among the African and Coloured voters in the early 1920's was whether it was better to cling to the devil they knew or risk their future

1. Kadalie had no time for Garveyism. (C. Kadalie: My Life, p.220-221).

2. C. Kadalie: My Life, p.67.

3. Ibid, p.62, 64, 65; The Workers' Herald 15th May, 1925.

4. Ilange lase Natal 4th July, 15th August and 24th October, 1924.

with the devil they did not. As long as the Unionist Party existed, most African voters supported it as the party most likely to promote their interests.⁽¹⁾ When, however, it merged with the South African Party, the choice was no longer so obvious. Smuts, as Boer general and architect of the hated Act of Union, was an object of a suspicion that was in no way lessened by his Savoy Hotel speech of 1917, which "painted the Bantu as a menace to European civilisation".⁽²⁾ Then, if he was remembered by white labour as the ruthless suppressor of the 1922 Rand strike, to the black workers his reputation was stained by the bloodshed of Port Elizabeth and Bulhoek and of the Bondelzwarts affair in South West Africa.⁽³⁾ Although he could hardly be held responsible for the Port Elizabeth shooting, he would have recovered some popularity in the eyes of the African and Coloured communities if he had made some substantial reparation for the loss of life that had

1. Cape Times 14th February, 1920; The Eastern Province Herald 5th March, 1920.

2. Imvo Zabantsundu 27th May, 1924.

3. In 1922 the Bondelzwarts tribe lost 115 men killed in action against government troops and, when its flocks and herds were bombed, suffered casualties among its women and children. The issues involved were complicated, but the basic tribal grievance was loss of land and freedom. (W.K. Hancock: Smuts; the Fields of Force 1919-1950, Cambridge, 1968, p.100-108). Smuts, who was harshly criticised by the South African Labour Party, "could have cleared himself, the Governor-General said ... but he chose to shoulder the responsibility himself rather than sacrifice a subordinate officer." (Ibid, p.109-110).

been due to police mismanagement and miscalculation. But no: a special commissioner appointed to investigate claims for compensation for death and injury of persons who "were not willing spectators" eventually recommended ex gratia payments that could not have been better calculated to arouse resentment amongst the African and Coloured people -

"To dependants of three Europeans killed, £1,481,6s., to seven Europeans injured, £705,2s., to dependant of one coloured person killed £197,7s.6d., to two coloured persons injured £180, to dependants of two Natives killed £75, to one Native injured, £15. (1) cost of burial for unclaimed Natives £62,2s.6d." (1)

On the whole Smuts tended to lose black support not because of what he did, but because of what he did not do. As Umteteli wa Bantu, which naturally took up a pro-African ^{Salt} Party stance, admitted:

"It is true that General Smuts has done little in fourteen years to improve the Natives' position, and it is true that he has made grievous mistakes in his estimates of Native needs and in his measures to supply them." (2)

If his legislative measures introduced some solid reforms, these were less appreciated by Africans than their distasteful features were criticised by them. He was responsible for three Acts that closely affected Africans. The first of these was the Native Affairs Act of 1920, which set up the Native Affairs Commission, a continuing body to inquire into and make recommendations upon African interests and grievances and also "to recommend that conferences of Natives be convened by the Governor-General to

1. Umteteli wa Bantu 3rd February, 1923.

2. Quoted in The Cape Mercury 10th June, 1924.

ascertain the sentiments of the Native population in regard to any measure in so far as it may affect such population." Since to these conferences there might be invited delegates "from any association or union purporting to represent any native political or economic interest",⁽¹⁾ there was implicit in the Act a recognition of African trade unions and the possibility of their playing a small part in the process of consultation. In addition to setting up the Native Affairs Commission, the Act provided for the extension elsewhere of the local councils already found in the Transkei. However the Act aroused little enthusiasm among Africans. The Native Affairs Commission had no black members and in any case seemed to have little influence with the Government, while the proposed local councils were not mandatory. The South African Native National Congress was suspicious of the Act's implications of political segregation.⁽²⁾ The I.C.U., however, displayed little interest

The second Act was the Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923, which provided for the accommodation of urban Africans in locations. While it had its beneficial side, since it insisted that municipalities provide locations of reasonable standard and thus rescued Africans from the rack-renting of slum landlords and since it provided for advisory boards

1. Union of South Africa: Act No. 23 of 1920, Act to provide for the constitution of a commission and of native councils and for convening native conferences, with a view to facilitating the administration of native affairs, Section 16 (1).

2. P. Walshe: Op.cit., p.100-102.

chosen from amongst the residents, nonetheless the Act entailed racial segregation and meant more compulsion, a limitation upon freedom of choice of residence.⁽¹⁾

The third piece of legislation was the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1924, which begun its passage through Parliament at the beginning of 1923. It established conciliation machinery for industrial disputes, but excluded from its operation "pass bearing Natives". Since trade unions had to register under the Act in order to be recognised, those made up of such Africans could never achieve recognition. As a discriminatory measure it was denounced in the course of time by I.C.U. leaders, but not at once, perhaps because the Union, being almost wholly a Cape organisation, had a membership that was not left outside the Act on this particular ground. Africans in the Cape did not carry passes. The most substantial body of workers affected by that provision was the labour force in the gold and coal mines. The I.C.U. was affected only to the extent that those of its members who were farm labourers were specifically placed outside the scope of the Act, which did not apply to the agricultural industry.⁽²⁾

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1. The charge (The Workers' Herald 27th March, 1926) that the new locations were "badly laid out, the houses being cement-floored ramshackles, sluits taking the place of streets, and no lights whatever" no doubt bore an element of truth, but, all the same, they were generally an improvement on what there had been before.
 2. There was a fourth discriminatory Act, the Apprenticeship Act, but this seems to have brought no hostile response from organised African and Coloured labour.

Although its leaders subsequently made a great fuss about Bulhoek and Port Elizabeth, the I.C.U. did not turn against the South African Party government and abandon its policy of political non-alignment. The Third Conference of January, 1923, went to the trouble of repeating the resolution of October, 1921, that dissociated the I.C.U. "from any political body whatever".⁽¹⁾ There had been, it is true, Kadalie's mild flirtation with the Nationalists in the middle of 1921, but the obstacles to rapprochement between them and the African and Coloured people were too great to be readily surmounted. There had been a similar affaire with the Labour Party at the beginning of 1922, when Masabalala and other I.C.U. leaders were appearing on the same platforms as Cape Town Labour politicians.⁽²⁾ This did not survive the shock of white racial intransigence in the Transvaal during the 1922 strike, which saw sporadic attacks upon black workers. Africans found their sympathies all on the side of General Smuts in his endeavour to crush the ensuing rebellion. A resolution, framed by the visiting black American bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Bishop Vernon,⁽³⁾ was passed by the I.C.U. meeting in Cape Town condemning "the murderous onslaught on defenceless, peaceful non-Europeans" and urging the Government to protect their lives. It declared that the colour bar was responsible for the trouble on the Rand and should be abolished, and

1. Cape Times 23rd January, 1923.

2. A.P.O. 11th February, 1922.

3. C. Kadalie: My Life, p.50.

concluded by calling on the African and Coloured people to assist the authorities, while giving unswerving loyalty to the Government, King and country. A resolution moved by Communists in the crowd urging support for the strike on the ground that "defeat would mean defeat for all classes, both black and white"⁽¹⁾ was rejected.

The attitude of the Government towards black organisations was sufficiently conciliatory to permit in May, 1922, the reception by the Minister of Mines and Industries, ^F/~~E~~.S. Malan (who was exceptionally sympathetic towards African aspirations) of an I.C.U. delegation reporting the resolutions of the Port Elizabeth Conference of October, 1921. Kadalie urged the minister to consider the claim of his Union to be the most representative of the majority of workers in the country, and he, without definite promises, agreed to consider the I.C.U.'s claim and its other requests.⁽²⁾ Altogether 1922 saw no possibility of I.C.U. support for the opposition parties.

Although the 1923 Conference at Cape Town was opened by the visiting British Communist, Tom Mann, who had been invited to South Africa by the white labour movement, the I.C.U. took care to point out that the invitation to Mann did not imply that it accepted his political views, and,

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1. E. Roux: Time Longer than Rope, p.151.
 2. S.W. Johns: The birth of non-white trade unionism in South Africa, p.187.

in fact, he was asked to perform the ceremony only because the Mayor of Cape Town declined to do so.⁽¹⁾ In neither of the two speeches that he delivered for the I.C.U. did the Union's guest put forward a communist point of view, dilating largely upon the value of organisation for working class advancement and upon the housing conditions in Cape Town. In his speech, after congratulating the I.C.U. on its achievements over the four years of its existence, he called upon it to maintain close ties with the Cape Federation, whose Secretary was also present as was Thomas Boydell, the Labour Party leader. But the assembled delegates remained unmoved by this plea and were more ready to castigate the white labour movement than the South African Party as the author of their troubles. So little did they feel at one with white trade unionists that they resolved to observe the birthday of the I.C.U., 17th January, as Labour Day instead of May Day.⁽²⁾ It was the white workers rather than the Government that bore the odium for the increasing practice of substituting white for African labour on the railways and in other fields of employment.⁽³⁾ While

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1. Cape Times 20th January, 1923. The Cape Times tended to muddle the I.C.U. and the I.C.W.U. up and the General Secretary of the latter was at pains to point out that his Union had nothing to do with the open-air meeting which Mann had addressed in the evening of the first day of the I.C.U. Conference, 18th January, adding primly, "nor is Mr. Tom Mann the likely person we would invite to speak at our meetings." (Cape Times 23rd January, 1923).
 2. Cape Times 23rd January, 1923.
 3. Cape Times 22nd and 23rd January, 1923.

the Government was chided for setting a bad example to other employers, especially farmers, by paying black labour on the railways so badly,⁽¹⁾ it was not subjected to those virulent attacks that characterised later I.C.U. conferences.

The 1923 Conference, it is true, did raise once again the Port Elizabeth riots, but not for the sake of arousing feeling against the authorities. The delegates in a moderately phrased - and futile - resolution decided to approach the Government in order to urge upon it the duty of compensating the dependants of those killed.⁽²⁾ They also resolved that a memorial to the victims be erected in Port Elizabeth, a proposal that evoked some slight dissent from the Cape Town delegation, though when it came to a vote, the motion was accepted unanimously.⁽³⁾ Curiously the Conference did not discuss, or so it seems, the legislation, then impending, that was later to be a fruitful source of complaint. It was concerned rather with the questions of unemployment, wages and conditions of work, especially of railway and farm workers.⁽⁴⁾

1. Cape Times 22nd January, 1923.

2. Ibid.

3. "Mr. H. Johnson (Cape Town) said he had nothing against the memorial, but cautioned the Conference to go slowly, seeing that they had so many irons in the fire." (Cape Times 23rd January, 1923).

4. Cape Times 20th and 23rd January, 1923. Instances were cited of men paid 4s. and 4s.6d. a day on the railways after many years' service, and 10s. a month on the farms. The practice of issuing wine rations in lieu of wages was again condemned and a resolution passed to ask for legislation on this point.

There was a resolution calling for a minimum wage "in all districts and occupations for the African workers", but it was somewhat vague when it came to suggest machinery for implementing one: "the respective districts shall fix the standards in conjunction with the General Executive of the I.C.U.". The preamble to the resolution is instructive in that it appears to accept wage differentials based on race. It speaks of

"the right of every workman, whatever he may be, to an income sufficient to enable him to maintain his family in civilised comfort, in Christian decency and citizenship, in physical efficiency and material comfort and social amenity of his respective class or community ..." (1)

Other matters discussed included the question of African representation at the International Labour Conference;⁽²⁾ the establishment of labour bureaux "in every centre controlled by the I.C.U.";⁽³⁾ education, which led to a resolution calling upon the public authorities to improve facilities;⁽⁴⁾ the need for a sanatorium for African phthisis patients;⁽⁵⁾ and the acquisition of a building for the I.C.U. and a printing press.⁽⁶⁾

1. Cape Times 23rd January, 1923.

2. Cape Times 20th January, 1923.

3. Cape Times 22nd January, 1923.

4. The delegates from East London thought that, in his own town, "the Government had done well." (Ibid).

5. Cape Times 23rd January, 1923. Phthisis was a disease contracted by miners. The question of a sanatorium had already been raised with the Minister of Mines, who had promised "that a sanatorium would be considered and erected if there were serious cases." Kadalie, on the strength of the year he had spent as a clerk at Shamva in Southern Rhodesia, "said that he had been connected with the mines and had seen thousands dying every year of miners' phthisis."

6. The Workers' Herald 21st July, 1923.

The Conference, which was disappointed in its hope that a deputation would be received by the Prime Minister to hear the resolutions that had been passed, did gain the ear of J.W. Jagger, the Minister of Railways, who was called on by five I.C.U. representatives, including the President, the General Secretary and the Organiser-in-Chief. The interview was cordial, the Minister sympathetic, the deputation deferential. While holding out no hope for improved wages for railway men and dockworkers, who, he thought, were already adequately paid in relation to the cost of living, Jagger promised to look into certain grievances regarding housing and rations that the I.C.U. had raised, as well as various individual complaints. The question of school facilities, he suggested, should be taken up with the appropriate Provincial Administrator.⁽¹⁾

By the time the next Conference of the I.C.U. assembled, the Fourth at East London in January, 1924, the political situation in South Africa had been transformed by the formation of an electoral pact between Hertzog's Nationalists and the Labour Party, led by Colonel Creswell, but the Conference found the Union still politically neutral. The 30-odd delegates (all apparently from the Cape apart from one or two from South West Africa and John Mancoe from Bloemfontein) were, it is true, welcomed to East London by the Labour M.L.A., James Stewart, but he had been asked only because the Mayor of East London had refused.⁽²⁾ Stewart's participation aroused

1. According to Kadalie (My Life, p.56) a deputation was also received by the Minister of Education.

2. Imvo Zabantsundu 22nd January, 1924.

some adverse criticism in Labour circles in the Transvaal.⁽¹⁾ His speech, which he prefaced by saying that he thought it "the duty of every sensible white man to assist the blacks to raise their status",⁽²⁾ was unusual in that it was not devoted to advising moderation. Advice of this sort figured in the speech of Professor D.D.T. Jabavu, of Fort Hare Native College, who gave the opening address. Yet he was far from being mealie-mouthed and the avoidance of "extravagant language" and the adoption of a "moderate tone" formed only part of the sensible remarks he made. He urged the members of the I.C.U. to be loyal to their leaders, to work for the co-operation of "those two sections of the African people, coloured and native, with a view to building up a new, strong, united race," and to pay their subscriptions regularly.⁽³⁾ The support he expressed for the Union was forthright. He came, he said

"to that conference as an outsider, yet an admirer of the work performed by the organisation. He said there were many people who had thrown mud at this movement, and he had willingly gone there to clear them in the eyes of the public. He was a staunch supporter of the work, and believed in the cause of Africa which the movement advocated ... It had been very often said by the opponents of their movement that they stood for strikes. He was there to tell them that an industrial strike was not a crime nor sin against any Government; a strike was a protest. They were on the right road building up an African civilisation ... The curse of their race was that many people were despising a good thing for the simple reason that men who were at the head of affairs had not passed a certain standard of education. These men, whether educated or not, it was their duty to support ..." ⁽⁴⁾

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1. Cape Times 2nd February, 1924, which seemed to be hoping for a Cape-Transvaal Labour split on the issue.
 2. The East London Daily Dispatch 23rd January, 1924.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Ibid.

The presence of Tengo Jabavu's son undoubtedly gave a cachet to the Conference; and also brought upon him the suspicion of the authorities.⁽¹⁾ Tengo's other son, A.M. Jabavu, also came out in support of the I.C.U. and, since he was the editor of Imvo Zabantsundu, the Union now had a respectable mouthpiece in the Eastern Province. Further support from the African "establishment" came from Dr. Rubusana, who, after declaring that he was there "as a listener", spoke at what must have been some length, echoing the sentiments expressed by Professor Jabavu. The breach between him and Masabalala was evidently closed.

The Conference got down to business. There was still no sharp criticism of the Smuts administration. The Industrial Conciliation Bill escaped comment and there was only an expression of disappointment with one of the provisions of the Urban Areas Act and with the refusal of the Government to lease Crown land to Africans in the Eastern Province. It was not the segregation feature of the 1923 Act that disturbed the Conference, which paid tribute to the Government for "its endeavour to ameliorate the lot of the African race", but Clause 12, which empowered municipal authorities to register African residents and which was coupled with the pass laws and labour contracts, "barbaric systems responsible

1. The police had inquired into a visit paid to him by two I.C.U. officials in 1923 (Ibid), who must have been Kadalie and La Guma (C. Kadalie: My Life, p.55-56).

for the continual degradation of the African races".⁽¹⁾

The policy of the I.C.U. in regard to the Act appears to have been framed by James S. Thaele, who was far from disapproving of segregation. In a letter to the Superintendent of Locations, Cape Town, he put his position most explicitly:

"As one of the leading lights of the Cape National Congress, I shall state my side of the question as representing the consensus of opinion of the Cape Natives:

"(a) We accept the principle of territorial segregation as the only amicable and practical solution of the native problem.

"(b) We denounce the multitudinous regulations that will, or are contemplated (sic) in these segregated areas, such as to be indoors at 9 o'clock, and the system of contract labour, &c. &c.

"(c) N'dabeni regulations should be taken as a corollary.

"(d) We denounce, deprecate the pass system as a degrading unnecessary evil to the Cape Native or any Native.

"(e) We shall agitate against it from now until the millenium.

"Dear sir, it is the avowed policy of the Cape National Congress now in theory, to resort to the method of 'passive resistance' and it will be so in practice when the pass laws come into operation ..."⁽²⁾

The Conference concluded by reaffirming its policy of non-alignment with any political party and remaining outside politics, but paradoxically accepted the principle of putting up I.C.U. candidates in provincial and municipal elections in the Cape Province.⁽³⁾

1. Cape Times 26th February, 1924.

2. Cape Archives: Minutes of Meetings of the Native Affairs Committee, City of Cape Town, J.S. Thaele to G.P. Cook, Superintendent of Langa Township 14th January, 1924, Volume I, Parcel 107, Item 338.

3. Cape Times 26th February, 1924.

In spite of its continued political neutrality it is clear that the I.C.U. felt that its future lay with a national, colour-blind labour movement and even looked beyond South Africa to the British labour movement. The Conference congratulated the Labour Party upon its "steady ascendancy ... in the Imperial Parliament" and Miss Margaret Bondfield upon her election to the House of Commons and her appointment to the presidency of the Trades Union Congress. Here is the beginning of the policy that came to fruition in 1927, when Clements Kadalie toured Britain, the appeal to British Labour to come to the assistance of the oppressed workers of South Africa. Although the South African Native National Congress had appealed in vain to the Imperial Parliament, the hope of external assistance - and there seemed no better source of such help than the United Kingdom - died hard. The Conference expressed the hope that the growing strength of the Labour Party would

"secure better conditions for the working classes in the United Kingdom, and ultimately for all workers in their several homelands, including those worst paid toilers, the African workers of the Union of South Africa." (1)

It further hoped that the increase in the number of women Members of Parliament in Britain would "lead to better understanding between the Government and the masses, and a measure of sympathy for oppressed peoples throughout the world, especially the African races of the Union of South Africa, who are outlawed and rendered homeless by successive Acts of the

1. Ibid.

Union Parliament". (1)

The I.C.U. would have liked an alliance with the white labour movement in South Africa and regretted its failure to respond. The Conference expressed the hope that the time would come when the white trades unions would open their doors to black workers and adopt "an enlightened policy, on the basis of which may be expected friendly co-operation and ultimate fusion of all labour forces into one big union." (2)

At the same time it recorded its

"consternation and sad disappointment with that portion of Colonel Creswell's recent Pretoria speech, which justified the Nationalist-Labour pact on the ground of the combined opposition of the two parties thereto to what the Labour leader described as the Government's policy of employing non-Europeans in spheres of labour hitherto preserved for Europeans.

"Such an attitude irreparably injures any reasonable prospects of co-operation between European and non-European workers, and delays the triumph of the ideals of trade unionism and the consummation of Labour rule in this land." (3)

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1. Ibid. The resolution congratulating the British Labour Party on its victory in the general election of December, 1923, was passed on to Ramsay Macdonald, whose acknowledgment, published in The Workers' Herald of 15th May, 1925, led Kadalie to claim in his Report for 1924 that his Union had received "international recognition". In the same Report he wrote: "Having also interested myself in journalistic work I resorted in (sic) contributing articles on South African matters to 'The Messenger' a Negro Monthly Magazine in New York and these articles influenced to a great extent the international reputation of our Organisation in the United States of America, England and Europe." (The Workers' Herald 15th May, 1925).
 2. Cape Times 26th February, 1924.
 3. Cape Times 25th January and 26th February, 1924.

Resolutions passed by the Conference dealt with the questions of a minimum wage, the conditions of agricultural workers, and the recruiting system and condemned the employment of non-union labour in the Cape Town docks. Thaele was to be put forward as the I.C.U.'s choice of a representative at the International Labour Conference. The Port Elizabeth riots came in for discussion once more, and there was also further talk of acquiring a printing press and a building to house the Head Office.⁽¹⁾ The minimum wage resolution embodied the same preamble as that of the 1923 resolution, but was more precise in its suggested procedure. It called for minimum wage legislation and instructed the Board of Arbitration to approach the Government and Members of Parliament.

The East London Conference left the I.C.U. still in a political limbo, as uneasy about the policy of the party in office as it was out of sympathy with the opposition parties. When in April of that year (1924) the Governor-General, on the advice of General Smuts, dissolved Parliament, Kadalie's Union took the initiative in summoning a meeting of African leaders, to be known as the All African Convention, to decide what advice to give to black voters in the coming general election. An invitation to "all leaders of the present existing organisations of non-Europeans of South Africa" was issued at Port Elizabeth by Clements Kadalie, S.M. Masabalala

1. Cape Times 10th January and 26th February, 1924.

and S.M. Bennett Ncwana; and the organisations to which appeal was specifically directed were the African National Congress, the African People's Organisation, the Bantu Union, the I.C.U., the Cape Native Voters' Association, the South African Indian Congress, the Inter-Racial Association, the Federation of South African Native Teachers and the Cape Province Farmers' Association.⁽¹⁾ For an organisation that claimed to be a trade union, the I.C.U. was in strange company, since all the other bodies (with the exception of the Teachers' Federation and the Farmers' Association) were primarily political pressure groups. Ncwana, who had evidently lost interest for the moment in the I.C.W.U., was the General Organiser of the Cape Native Voters' Association, which, as the Griqualand West Native Voters' Association, had been started the previous year with the object of mobilising black voters in support of the South African Party.⁽²⁾

The Port Elizabeth invitation speaks of "a race co-operative movement of African Peoples ... already under consideration by various organisations in Cape Town ..."⁽³⁾ and

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1. Imvo Zabantsundu 15th April, 1924, which says: "The appeal is prescribed to the following organisations in the four Provinces of the Union of South Africa: African National Congress ..." The report in the Cape Times 9th April, 1924, which is otherwise identical, says: "The appeal is subscribed by ..."
 2. Umteteli wa Bantu 14th and 21st April, 4th August and 1st September, 1923; Ilanga lase Natal 1st June, 1923. Several branches were formed throughout the Cape Province. At its inception it was criticised by Selby Msimang for its uncritical adherence to the S.A.P., which, however, earned it praise from H.D. Tyamzashe, later an official of the I.C.U. and an implacable enemy of Ncwana.
 3. Imvo Zabantsundu 15th April, 1924.

a few days after it was issued, when Kadalie and Masabalala must still have been in Port Elizabeth, a "United non-European Congress" was inaugurated in Cape Town "to protect and further the educational, commercial, political and industrial interests of the non-European peoples of South Africa",⁽¹⁾ with La Guma of the I.C.U. as Secretary and S. Reagon of the African People's Organisation as President. The affiliated organisations were, besides, the I.C.U. and the A.P.O., the Cape British Indian Council, the Universal Negro Improvement Society and the South African Inter-Racial Association.⁽²⁾ The significance of this abortive attempt at collaboration is that it shows that as late as mid-April the I.C.U. was still politically uncommitted. Within the next fortnight, however, it took up a position of hostility to both S.A.P. and Pact, and this put an end to any chance of working with the A.P.O. and the Cape Native Voters' Association. At the end of April James Thaele, President of the Cape A.N.C. and a member of the Board of Arbitration of the I.C.U., presided at a meeting in Cape Town, at which the General Secretary of the Cape Congress, Johnson Dlwati, expressed in strong terms African disappointment with the Government, at the same time repudiating segregation. He ended by saying that "a black man should never cast a vote in favour of a white man".⁽³⁾ The meeting resolved that, as

1. Cape Times 14th April, 1924.

2. Ibid.

3. Cape Times 28th April, 1924.

"the South African Party has no constructive policy for the non-European races and that the Hertzog-Creswell Pact comes with no clearly defined policy, other than that of 'divide and rule', the Cape African National Congress is now adopting the slogan of 'no policy, no vote'." (1)

This militant neutrality was not maintained for long. Soon the I.C.U. leaders were advocating, not a boycott of the election, but a vote against the Government, which in practice meant a vote for the Pact. In May Thaele, Dlwati, Kadalie and Masabalala (soon to be dismissed from the I.C.U.) travelled north to Bloemfontein to take part in the Conference of the A.N.C. and to try and persuade the national body to endorse the policy already formulated by the Cape Congress and the I.C.U. (2) ~~(Note 1)~~ "The issue before the conference", runs Kadalie's recollection,

"was whether to take a decision in support of the then Government led by General Smuts as Prime Minister, or to support the opposition led by General J.B.M. Hertzog. A long resolution in favour of the Smuts Government was moved by the Reverend Z.R. Mahabane, chaplain of the African National Congress, while the I.C.U. representative moved a resolution in the following words: 'That a change of Government was necessary and would be in the best interests of South Africa.' ... In speaking to the motion, I reminded the conference about the sins of the government in power ... When the vote was taken and declared by the 'Speaker', the I.C.U. counter-motion was carried by a large majority. This was my first major political victory." (3)

While the Conference did indeed urge the black electorate "to vote solidly for a change of Government", (4) Kadalie's

1. Ibid.

2. Cape Times 10th June, 1924.

3. C. Kadalie: My Life, p.58.

4. The Cape Mercury 3rd June, 1924.

account of what took place at Bloemfontein is open to question on two counts:- Firstly, the issue before the Conference was not baldly a choice between Smuts and Hertzog, since the A.N.C. could have chosen to boycott the election or to take up no position at all; and, secondly, the implication that A.N.C. policy would have been different had Kadalie not attended the Conference is dubious. A substantial body of Congress opinion, it is clear, had moved, before the Conference took place, in the direction of political neutrality. At its Annual Conference of the previous year, also at Bloemfontein, Congress had expressed a lack of confidence in Smuts as Minister of Native Affairs, because, without consulting African opinion, he had at the last moment introduced a clause in the Urban Areas Bill withholding freehold tenure from Africans in the towns and had refused to postpone the Bill at the request of a Congress delegation.

At the conclusion of the A.N.C. conference Kadalie, Masabalala, Thaele and Dlwati had a meeting with General Hertzog in Bloemfontein.⁽¹⁾ Although the initiative appears to have come from the I.C.U. and the Cape Congress,⁽²⁾ the overtures of Kadalie and his companions could not have been unwelcome. Hertzog was under the impression, if not at that time, then later, that the African vote was decisive

1. Cape Times 10th June, 1924.

2. C. Kadalie: My Life, p.58.

in twelve of the fifty-one Cape seats.⁽¹⁾ At that meeting a bargain was struck, the details of which are, at least in part, recorded in Kadalie's autobiography. The Nationalists printed and distributed the anti-Government resolution adopted by the A.N.C. conference⁽²⁾ and also printed, on their Cape Town presses, ten thousand copies of an election edition of The Workers' Herald, which was given out free.⁽²⁾ There is no hint of any more solid benefits for the black workers and it can only be supposed that Hertzog's temporary allies were duped, getting nothing other than a short-lived sense of being at the hub of affairs. One may also suspect that Kadalie, who was not immune to white flattery, fell victim to General Hertzog's charm and courtesy.

From Bloemfontein Kadalie and Masabalala, fortified by their "great victory",⁽³⁾ proceeded at the expense of Hertzog and Arthur Barlow, the Bloemfontein Labour M.L.A., who paid their fares, to King William's Town, where the All African Convention opened on 15th May.⁽⁴⁾ "For the first time in sixteen years," reported Imvo Zabantsundu,

1. C.M. Tatz: Shadow and Substance in South Africa; a Study in Land and Franchise Policies Affecting Africans 1910-1960 (Pietermaritzburg, 1962), p.39, 42-3.

2. Cape Times 10th June, 1924; C. Kadalie: My Life, p.58-59.

3. C. Kadalie: My Life, p.59.

4. Ibid, p.59-60; Cape Times 17th May, 1924.

"has a completely representative convention of Native voters assembled and acted in absolute unison as regards policy affecting a political crisis. More than twelve associations representing every conceivable phase of Native intelligent activity met at King William's Town two weeks ago to consider and decide upon a common course for the impending general election. The proceedings were, in typical Bantu deliberative fashion, slow, protracted, often passionate but always united and determined ..." (1)

As in the case of the A.N.C. conference, Kadalie's account of the King William's Town meeting arouses some scepticism. He says:-

"We urged the conference to follow the lead given by the African National Congress in Bloemfontein, and to be guided by the European electors who desired a change of government. In the early hours of the morning we challenged a division on the two motions (sic). Our motion for a change of government, as adopted at Bloemfontein, won the day." (2)

Although the question of deciding what party voters were to support was the most contentious of the issues before it, the Convention did not confine itself to that. The subjects of discussion were outlined, in an opening speech, by Professor D.D.T. Jabavu, and they included (among others) the extension of the vote to white women, which threatened to devalue the black vote; a minimum wage for black employees; "the new pass law which had come in behind their backs, under the Native Urban Areas Act, and which was put through without any consultation with black people and was operating in Capetown and other places"; and the

1. Imvo Zabantsundu 27th May, 1924.

2. C. Kadalie: My Life, p.60. In his account Kadalie errs in calling the meeting the Cape Native Voters' Convention.

colour bar.⁽¹⁾ After this opening address there was a procedural dispute: should the Convention first decide between Smuts and Hertzog and then draw up a manifesto that would list the major black demands for presentation to candidates, or should the manifesto be drawn up and the black voters then decide between the parties in the light of the reception accorded to the manifesto? While the chairman, Ben Tele, was in favour of an immediate decision, Kadalie and Masabalala argued, not for a vote against Smuts, but for supporting that party prepared to implement the manifesto.⁽²⁾ It was this point that Kadalie won.

During the course of an all-night sitting the Convention drew up its manifesto and agreed to support whichever party or candidates that would subscribe to its terms. The more important requests that were enumerated were African access to the facilities of the Land Bank, amendment of the Urban Areas Act to permit African freehold rights in urban areas, the repeal or amendment of the Natives Land Act of 1913, the appointment of African court interpreters,⁽³⁾ the extension of the Cape franchise to the other provinces of the Union of South Africa, repeal of the pass laws, a ban on the importation of African labour from outside South Africa, minimum wage regulations, and a national system of African education.⁽⁴⁾

1. The Cape Mercury 16th May, 1924.

2. Ibid. The "proceedings were by no means amicable."

3. Hertzog had replaced black interpreters with white ones when he was Minister of Justice in the Botha cabinet. Imvo Zabantsundu 27th May, 1924).

4. Cape Times 17th May, 1924; The Cape Mercury 16th May, 1924.

Almost the only request likely to commend itself to the Pact was that for "minimum wage regulations, which would protect the workers in all kinds of occupation by compelling employers to pay not less than a fixed minimum wage for all skilled and unskilled labourers, irrespective of race or colour."⁽¹⁾ This the Pact implemented as part of its "civilised labour policy", fixing wages so high in fields of employment where whites found jobs that employers saw taken away the only reason (in most cases) for employing black labour - its cheapness.

The Convention closed on Friday 16th May, having expressed opposition to "any form of pass law in the Cape Province", condemnation of the colour bar, and "alarm and consternation" at the discriminatory treatment meted out to offenders in rape cases.⁽²⁾

At the conclusion of the Convention Kadalie returned to Cape Town. Although during the ensuing years he had occasion to say many harsh things about the Pact, looking back twenty years later upon the events of 1924, he appeared to have no regrets about his real or imagined successes at Bloemfontein and King William's Town. "Jubilant and strengthened by these two political victories", he wrote in his autobiography,

1. Ibid.

2. The Cape Mercury 17th May, 1924.

"I returned to Cape Town, where an enthusiastic reception awaited me from all sections of the population. In the closing stages of the campaign I became an important figure in Cape Town. During lunch hours I addressed open-air meetings in support of the Nationalist-Labour Pact candidates. Wherever a Pact speaker, generally a European, got a bad hearing or heckling, I was sent for and rushed to the scene." (1)

His triumphant progress passed unrecorded in the newspapers. On 10th June he spoke after M.A. Gamiet, the secretary of the Inter-Racial Association and a prominent member of the Cape Malay community, at a well-attended meeting in the City Hall, which, according to a public announcement, was to be conducted by "coloured men who have no Party axe to grind", but which, in fact, was induced to pass a vote of no-confidence in the Government and support for the opposition.⁽²⁾

It is quite astonishing that black voters ever found the National Party, which was afterwards to deprive them of the franchise and subject them to endless humiliations, more attractive than the South African Party, for all its imperfections and failings. The I.C.U. position is by no means explained by revulsion against the sins of the Smuts Government enumerated by Kadalie in his autobiography - "the shootings at Port Elizabeth in 1920, the Bulhoek massacre, the calling of troops to the Cape Town dock strike in 1919",⁽³⁾

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1. C. Kadalie: My Life and the I.C.U., p.60.
 2. Cape Times 11th June, 1924; leaflet among Morris Alexander Papers, File 12.
 3. C. Kadalie: My Life, p.58. "With the massacres of Port Elizabeth and Bulhoek still fresh in our memories we considered that a government under General Hertzog could not possibly be more reactionary or more callous in its dealings with the native workers than the Smuts Government has been." (The Workers' Herald 12th May, 1928). This seems to be a feeble justification for supporting the Pact.

since these grievances were not new and the Government's handling of the Cape Town dock strike and the Port Elizabeth riots had not prevented the I.C.U. from supporting the South African Party in the 1921 election. Neither can hostility to the Government be attributed to any violent reaction against the Urban Areas Act or the Industrial Conciliation Act. It was sins of omission, not sins of commission, that offended the Coloured and African voters, who felt that the S.A.P. took an interest in them only when there was an election in the offing. The influence of Advocate Morris Alexander must have swayed many people in Cape Town. A member of the old Unionist Party, Alexander had been unable to overcome his repugnance for the South African Party when his own party merged with it, and he preferred to remain in the House of Assembly as an independent. In 1924 he stood for election in the Hanover Street constituency of Cape Town, a seat controlled by the Coloured electorate, as a founder of a new party, the Constitutional Democrats. Such was the respect he enjoyed that he gained the support of the I.C.U. leaders - Gumbs and Fife, as well as Kadalie and Thaele - and also the support of deserters from the A.P.O., such as C.J. Carelse, a former Senior Vice-President. Alexander appeared on the platform at National Party meetings, condemning - as he did at Stellenbosch, where he spoke on behalf of Paul Sauer - what he called the autocracy of Smuts's government and complaining that the S.A.P. had dishonoured all its 1921 election promises.

"We must get rid of this Government of blood and iron ... The new Government is going to be

"government for the people by the people. The Government has been in power for 14 years, and what is their record? Their record is a hopeless failure." (1)

In the absence of any sense of loyalty to the existing government it is hardly surprising that some voters succumbed to the blandishments, during the election campaign, of those Pact candidates who offered the Coloured community economic (though not social) integration into white society and sometimes denied the intention, or least the feasibility, of disfranchising Africans in the Cape.⁽²⁾ Even segregation, if equitable, possessed a certain allurements. General Hertzog seemed to some to be offering a fair division of the country, whereas Smuts appeared to be implementing segregation in an underhand and unfair way, exemplified by the residential segregation of Africans in towns under the Urban Areas Act and of Indians in the Class Areas Bill of 1924. "I would welcome segregation," said the Rev. Z.K. Mahabane at Thirteenth Annual Conference of the African National Congress at Bloemfontein in May, 1924,

"if the land was divided so that 50 per cent. was allocated for occupation by the white people and 50 per cent. for the black, but not as at present where only 13 per cent. is allocated to five million natives and the rest to one and a half million of whites." (3)

1. Cape Times 13th June, 1924.

2. Addressing black voters in East London, Col. Creswell said that he agreed "broadly" with General Hertzog's segregation policy, but that disfranchisement was "not practical politics." (Cape Times 29th May, 1924).

3. Cape Times 26th May, 1924.

Kadalie himself, in a speech that did him little credit because it contradicted his fundamental belief in a racially integrated society declared,

"The natives were not afraid of this bogey of segregation. Segregation was natural. Mr. Jagger⁽¹⁾ lived segregated from his clerks and working men. There was segregation in native territories; there was segregation in New York, and it worked well." (2)

Only an analysis of South African constituencies in 1924 could give any indication of how much the I.C.U. influenced the course of the election. Given the anti-Government swing in the white electorate and the widespread disillusionment with the Smuts Government among the black voters, the I.C.U.'s influence was probably small. It is likely that, if Coloured voters deserted the South African Party in spite of (or because of) Dr. Abdurahman, African ones preferred to stick to Smuts whatever his faults.⁽³⁾ As Ben Nyombolo of the I.C.W.U. put it: "While the native is not easily bluffed, the coloured man seems to be the victim of the propaganda of the Pact."⁽⁴⁾ Even the Congress leaders seem to have had second thoughts about the advisability of voting against the Government. A prominent Nationalist, Tielman Roos, in an unguarded moment exclaimed at an election meeting early in June: "The Native is not an asset to the white man in this

1. A minister in the Smuts government.

2. Cape Times 11th June, 1924.

3. A meeting of voters at N'dabeni on 15th June condemned "the attitude adopted by certain misleaders, who generally pass wild resolutions on the Parade" and affirmed support for the S.A.P. (The Cape Mercury, 17th June, 1924).

4. Cape Times 17th June, 1925.

country - he is a curse."⁽¹⁾ This was a timely reminder to the black voter of what value was put upon his people by a party that was intermittently trying to gain his support.

Kadalie was convinced that he had made a major contribution to the Hertzog-Creswell victory.⁽²⁾ Three months later, in September, he had his reward. When the member for Pinetown, one of the Durban constituencies, J.S. Marwick, complained in the House of Assembly about Kadalie's activities in Durban, he was rebuffed by the new Minister of Justice, Tielman Roos, who stated that there was nothing to stop black workers from forming trade unions.⁽³⁾ It was, indeed, a meagre reward; yet it is difficult to see what more was to be anticipated of a coalition pledged to safeguard the interests of the white worker and the white farmer.

1. Cape Times 11th June, 1924.

2. The Workers' Herald 12th May, 1928.

3. C. Kadalie: My Life, p.62-63; Union of South Africa: Debates of the House of Assembly 2nd September, 1924.

CHAPTER IV

Moscow versus Amsterdam, 1925-1926.

"Depending upon the slogan of the Pact Government for a 'Civilised South Africa', all workers, both black and white, had pinned their faith on their new bride, who was to 'deliver the goods' which were kept in store for the exclusive use by big finance. The goods were 'delivered', but to our disappointment, instead of supplying the child with bread, our Pact bride gave the child stones in the form of the Colour Bar Bill, enforcement of Pass Laws upon our women in the Transvaal, the retrenchment of Natives from state undertakings such as the Railway, etc. Thus, instead of coming to attend the wedding feast of the King's son, we met in Johannesburg last April sorely disappointed, and we vociferously protested against such unjust measures introduced by our new Government."

(Clements Kadalie, April, 1926).

The Pact Government did not delay in introducing measures designed to alleviate the "poor white" problem and to set at rest the fears of white workers that their privileged position would be destroyed. As soon as it was elected, it began to prosecute with greater vigour a policy that had already been applied by General Smuts's Government,⁽¹⁾ the replacement of black workers (despite extra expense) in government employment (especially on the railways) by unemployed whites and, in some cases, in the Cape Town docks, for example, by unemployed Coloured workers.⁽²⁾ Private employers were also encouraged to take on whites in preference to blacks. All this activity was euphemistically termed "the civilised labour policy."

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1. Umteteli wa Bantu 14th April, 1923. Cape Times 17th February, 1921 and 22nd and 23rd January, 1923. "In conformity with the expressed wish of the Government, white labour is being employed as far as possible on new construction ... On lines authorised under the several more recent construction programmes, employment has been given to a large number of unskilled labourers as a means of livelihood. Many of the senior officers in charge of lines now in course of construction have therefore had considerable experience with this class of labour, and where their efforts to carry out work have not met with the success they would wish for, this failure has probably been due to the class of men recruited, being composed of a proportion of the 'unemployable' type.

"In regard to the question of the cost of white labour compared with native labour, the results which have been observed by the wider use of white labour under the present new construction programme have confirmed past experience, viz. the cost of earth-works etc. undertaken by white labour is higher than if done by native labour ..."
(Union of South Africa: Report of the General Manager of Railways and Harbours for the year ended 31st March, 1924, U.G. 43-1924, p.xxi).

2. Ilanga lase Natal 29th August, 1924.

In February, 1925, the first legislative proposals of the coalition were made to the House of Assembly. The 16th February saw the first reading of two major Bills, the Mines and Works Act (1911) Amendment Bill, popularly known as the Colour Bar Bill, and the Wage Bill. The former was likely to make little practical difference. For, although the colour bar of the original Mines and Works Act had been judged ultra vires by the Transvaal Provincial Division of the Supreme Court in 1923, the mine companies, bearing in mind the 1922 general strike, had not dared to antagonise white labour by taking advantage of the legal decision. If there was any danger to white labour in the mining industry, it lay not in the opening of skilled work to blacks but in the introduction of machinery that could be worked by semi-skilled black labour.⁽¹⁾

The Wage Bill on the other hand was an ambiguous measure. The intentions of its framers were clear enough - to reserve for whites any fields of employment where they were likely to come into competition with blacks and where the possession of a particular skill and the proposed Colour Bar Bill did not provide a safeguard. By preventing employers from sweating their labour, the Government hoped to ensure that the unsweated labour would be white. "It is common knowledge", said Colonel Creswell, the Minister of Labour,

"that the tendency of modern industry unless controlled and checked simply leads to larger and larger

1. H.M. Robertson: 150 years of economic contact, Part II, p.20-21.

"sections of the population being sweated down below the level of dignified life. In South Africa we have not got a homogeneous population. We have two races separated by the wide gulf of history and civilisation; a gulf of difference in material wants which are considered necessary for life. The same process which leads to sweating in another country gives a tendency in this country to eliminate those who require the higher standard of life. In another sphere it is in exemplification of the truth of Gresham's 'Law of Currency'. In certain circumstances bad money will drive out the good. In the competitive wage-production system in a situation such as we have in South Africa the lower civilisation will gradually drive out the higher civilisation ... If our civilisation is going to subsist we look upon it as necessary that our industries should be guided so that they afford any men desiring to live according to the European standards greater opportunities of doing so ..."(1)

They were to be guided by a Wage Board that would make enquiries into different types of employment and recommend to the Minister of Labour a wage that would be sufficient for a worker to live "according to the European standards". Since the wage for each occupation where a determination was made was to prevail throughout the entire labour force engaged in that occupation, black labour would no longer, it was hoped, hold any attraction for employers. This was where the ambiguity arose. If the intention of the Bill was clear, it was not explicit. In theory race was not the criterion, but "civilisation". Since the Government would not call a spade a spade and relied upon an indirect method, the opponents of the Bill feared (or pretended to fear) that the hoped for results would not transpire and that the only effect would be to ruin industry. Thus General Smuts:

1. Union of South Africa: Debates of the House of Assembly 1925, Col.1589-1590.

"I have asked myself how this Bill is going to work. If you pay the same wage to the unskilled workers in any industry, whether white, coloured or black, what will that wage be? Well, I know what the black man is paid and I know the white man cannot subsist on it. I can only therefore conceive a policy whereby the black man is going to be paid more because he must be paid a wage which is a subsistence wage for the white man also. The minimum wage for the black man, therefore, must go up. Can the country stand it? Can the country afford it?". (1)

The discriminatory intention of the Bill was demonstrated all too clearly by the exclusion of two classes of workers from its scope, farm labourers and domestic servants, who were overwhelmingly black.⁽²⁾ Yet the apparent racial impartiality of the machinery proposed under the Bill⁽³⁾ and the need to deal with the very real problem of sweating in South Africa commended it to men for whom the industrial colour bar was indefensible, for example Advocate Alexander.⁽⁴⁾

1. Ibid, Col.1601.

2. When the representatives of white trade unionists, W.H. Andrews, W.A. Butler and R. Stuart, pressed for the inclusion of agriculture within the operation of the Bill, it was not because they were conscious of any concern for the blacks, but because they hoped that poor whites would be guided into farm labouring. (Union of South Africa: Report of the Select Committee on the Wage Bill, S.C.14 - 1925, p.1-3).

3. "The Wage Act makes no race or colour distinction, and the Wage Board does not set up any colour bar." But: "It is obvious that the different standards of living cannot be ignored in classifying different kinds of work". (F.A.W. Lucas: The determination of wages in South Africa, South African Journal of Economics, Vol. I, no. 1, March, 1933). Advocate Lucas was the first chairman of the Wage Board.

4. Union of South Africa: Debates of the House of Assembly, 1925, Col.1664-1665.

There was, besides, ~~the~~ possibility of action beneficial to the black unskilled because, in the event of the Wage Board's inability to recommend wages upon which the "employees may be able to support themselves in accordance with civilised habits of life", the Minister might direct it to recommend such wages as it considered suitable.

The ambiguity of the Wage Bill perhaps helped Kadalie to persist in his belief that General Hertzog was a "fine fellow", and Colonel Creswell too,⁽¹⁾ while Smuts was a "soldier who always wanted trouble" and "the English were hypocrites".⁽²⁾ As late as May, 1925, J.S. Marwick was complaining in the House of Assembly that Kadalie was flourishing at his meetings the letter that Hertzog had written to him in 1921 and claiming that he enjoyed "to some extent the moral and financial support of the Prime Minister".⁽³⁾ Kadalie, in his reluctance to revise his trust in the good intentions of the Pact Government, looked around for excuses. When it proposed to extend the pass laws to African women in the Transvaal, he blamed the Government's permanent officials, suggesting that those officials were "trying to bring the Pact Government into disrepute with the natives".⁽⁴⁾ Another scapegoat found by the

1. Ibid, Col.1764.

2. Ibid, Col.2892; The Workers' Herald 20th February, 1925.

3. Ibid, Col.2891. Marwick read the letter out. The Pact had its revenge in July, 1925, when a Labour M.L.A., Reyburn, revealed some of the correspondence relating to the proposed deportation of Kadalie in November, 1920. (Ibid, Col.6290-6291).

4. Ibid, Col.2892; The Workers' Herald 20th February, 1925.

I.C.U. leaders, unwilling to abandon their faith in Hertzog's goodwill, was the extremists of the National Party. This view was being entertained even in April, 1926, when, at the I.C.U. Conference of that year, the Prime Minister was reproached by one of the delegates for not having the gumption to stand up to these extremists.

"General Hertzog had (sic) high motives, but his legislation, by fits and starts, is actuated by the extreme left (sic) of his party ... The Native is a sacred trust of the white man, and General Hertzog should have asked himself whether he would have liked to stand in the boots of the Native as far as his Government's legislation was concerned." (1)

It was difficult, however, to maintain the fiction that the Pact's beneficent purposes were being frustrated by sinister forces and there was growing disillusionment with the Government. This disappointment coincided with the growth of the I.C.U. into a national organisation that was eclipsing the African National Congress as the most representative expression of black opinion. It coincided, too, with a change in the forces of the radical left. In 1921 the International Socialist League and other Marxist groups in Cape Town, (including the Industrial Socialist League) and Durban united to form the Communist Party of South Africa,⁽²⁾ and this, after the trauma inflicted by the

1. The Workers' Herald 28th April, 1926. Astonishingly the I.C.U. called upon the Labour Party to vote against the Colour Bar Bill in order to "prove itself worthy as a party representing the labouring classes of South Africa, irrespective of colour." (The Workers' Herald 20th February, 1925).

2. E. Roux: S.P. Bunting, p.49.

1922 Rand strike had healed, adopted a new attitude towards the blacks, though not without causing dissension within its ranks. In 1924 the Cape Town branch of the party became actively engaged in winning adherents among African and Coloured people; and it must have been then that James La Guma, the Assistant General Secretary of the I.C.U., joined it. At the Communist Party Conference in Johannesburg at the end of 1924 S. Buirski of Cape Town pressed hard for a campaign amongst blacks, but, although he received support from S.P. Bunting and E. Roux, then a student member of the Young Communist League, opposition came from W.H. Andrews, the party secretary, who "believed that the Communist Party should work among the organised workers, which meant the white workers", and C.F. Glass, who resigned from the Party on the ground that it was "running after the Natives 'who could not possibly appreciate the noble ideals of Communism'". However, a policy of proselytising the blacks was adopted by a narrow majority.⁽¹⁾ Making little headway among Africans, the party saw in the I.C.U. a means of making its influence felt. For its part the Union had hitherto always been at pains to dismiss the suggestion that it had anything to do with Communism. As late as October, 1923, its leaders insisted that it was pursuing solely industrial, non-political objectives.

"In other words, on the basis of pure Trade Unionism it accepts to co-operate with other labour unions,

1. E. Roux: S.P. Bunting, p.66-68; E. and W. Roux: Op.cit., p.38.

"but repudiates the 'Third International', meaning that no other revolutionary elements are permitted within the ranks of the Organisation. Our constitution does not permit the General Executive Council nor any individual officer to deviate by one iota from the declared policy." (1)

By 1925 the situation had changed. The circumstances of South African political life meant that black political objectives could be achieved only through influencing the white political system and, in spite of their complaints that they had lost confidence in the white man, it was into that system that the I.C.U. leaders wanted to penetrate. Although the C.P. was small and uninfluential, it appeared to be the only possible ally after an election in which one of the major parties had been derided and abused and the other two had, it was thought, accepted comradeship only to betray it almost at once. Therefore, not only did the I.C.U. not object to its officials joining the Communists (though few did so), but it also admitted into ^{its} ranks men who were already members of the party. Two of Kadalie's first co-adjutors in Johannesburg, the school teacher Stanley Silwana and the labourer Thomas Mbeki, were members. (2)

By the time the 1925 Conference of the I.C.U. was held, Communist influence was apparent. The Rand Daily Mail thought it significant and sinister that this Conference, which met in Johannesburg, should be attended by at least one "well-known

1. Ilanga lase Natal 9th October, 1923; Imvo Zabantsundu 9th October, 1923.

2. E. Roux: S.P. Bunting, p.70; E. Roux: Time Longer than Rope, p.202; E. and W. Roux: Op.cit., p.35.

local Communist", while its own reporter was excluded.⁽¹⁾ Under the influence of the Communists members of the I.C.U. began to call one another "comrade", and "capitalism" and "imperialism" featured more frequently in the speeches of the leaders. It may be suspected, however, that for many of them the charm of Communism did not extend beyond their delight in what one critic called its "curious 'lingo'".⁽²⁾ There was also a certain ambivalence. The British Empire was the villainous oppressor of Africans, yet the fount of justice and fair-play. In the issue of The Workers' Herald dated 27th March, 1926, by which time the front page regularly carried the legend, "The Herald exposes the 'good boys',⁽³⁾ as tools of imperialistic hypocrisy (sic)", one finds: "British Imperialism in Africa must be exposed and attacked vigorously". In the same issue South Africa is described as "this great Dominion of the British Empire". Early in 1925 Kadalie was saying that Africans "had no time for British ideals and traditions".⁽⁴⁾ Yet the delegates at the 1925 Conference, angered by the obstacles put in the way of the Union by the Town Council of Durban, chided the people of Natal for betraying their British heritage.

1. Rand Daily Mail 16th April, 1925.

2. Rev. R. Phillips to the Editor, The Workers' Herald 2nd June, 1925 (F/Joint Council File/30).

3. i.e. Africans associated with white liberals.

4. The Workers' Herald 20th February, 1925.

"Further it is not understandable to this Conference how a people such as those who constitute the majority of the citizens of Natal so closely associated with a race well bred in the best traditions of individual and public liberty, could stoop so low in the practice of those high principles for which their race is renowned, and enshrined in the annals of constitutional history and thus so graciously (sic) bring reproach upon the time honoured concession of free and unfettered freedom of discussion which has become a common characteristic of modern democracies ..." (1)

In a superficial way the Communists also influenced the new Constitution that the Union adopted in 1925. This fixed its name as the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of Africa, catering for a wide range of employment⁽²⁾ and aiming "to establish Branches of the Organisation throughout the African Continent".⁽³⁾ The registered Head Office was in Cape Town.⁽⁴⁾ Section 2 was the famous preamble based on that of the constitution of the Industrial Workers of the World. Since there were significant differences between them, it is worth placing the two side by side so that these differences appear most readily.

1. The Workers' Herald 15th June, 1926.

2. Municipal, waterside, mine, building, agricultural, marine, transport, railway, factory, domestic and warehouse workers. (Revised Constitution - Section 1).

3. Section 3 - Objects (e).

4. Section 1.

I.C.U.

Whereas the interests of the workers and those of the employers are opposed to each other,

the former living by selling their labour, receiving for it only part of the wealth they produce; and the latter living by exploiting the labour of the workers; depriving the workers of a part of the product of their labour in the form of profit,

no peace can be between the two classes,

a struggle must always obtain

about the division of the products of human labour, until the workers through their industrial organisations

take from the capitalist class the means of production, to be owned and controlled by the workers for the benefit of all, instead of for the profit of a few. Under such a system he who does not work, neither shall he eat.

The basis of remuneration shall be the principle, from every man according to his abilities, to every man according to his needs.

I.W.W.

The working class and employing class have nothing in common.

There can be no peace

so long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life.

Between these two classes a struggle must go on

until the workers of the world organise as a class,

take possession of the earth and the machinery of production,

and abolish the wage system.

I.C.U.

This is the goal for which the I.C.U. strives along with all other organised workers throughout the world. Further this Organisation does not foster or encourage antagonism towards other established bodies, political or otherwise, of African peoples, or of organised European Labour.

I.W.W.

We find that the centring of the management of industries into fewer and fewer hands makes the trade unions unable to cope with the ever growing power of the employing class. The trade unions foster a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage wars. Moreover, the trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers.

These conditions can be changed and the interest of the working class upheld only by an organisation formed in such a way that all its members in any one industry, or in all industries if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all.

Instead of the conservative motto, "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work", we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, "Abolition of the wage system".

I.C.U.I.W.W.

It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organised, not only for the every-day struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organising industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old. (1)

An inevitable class struggle and the need for the control by the workers of the means of production and for the abolition of the wage system, these are common to both. But the I.C.U. preamble omits the contrast between the hunger and want of the workers and the abundance of the small employing class, perhaps because, to the blacks, it was not only the small capitalist class that had "all the good things of life"; rather did it appear to be the small dominant race. The I.C.U. instead contrasts those who work with those who do not, possibly having in mind the black labourer and the white supervisor. Again, while the I.W.W. preamble talks of the organisation of the working class into a single body that will "carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown", and is critical of trade unions, the I.C.U. envisages the waging of the class struggle through "industrial organisations" and accepts the existence of "other established bodies, political or otherwise, of African peoples, or of organised European

1. P. Renshaw: The Wobblies; the Story of Syndicalism in the United States (London, 1967), frontispiece.

Labour". The final sentence of the I.C.U. preamble is all that is left of the non-alignment resolution of the Port Elizabeth Conference of October, 1921, and is significant for what it leaves out of that resolution (That this Organisation resolves unreservedly to dissociate itself from any political body whatever, but declares that its objectives are solely to propagate the industrial, economic and social advancement of all the African workers through industrial action on constitutional lines"), as well as for what it adds ("or of organised European Labour").

One thing that distinguishes the I.C.U. preamble from that of the I.W.W. is its echoes of Marx: the workers "living by selling their labour, receiving for it only part of the wealth they produce", the capitalists "depriving the workers of a part of the product of their labour in the form of profit", and again, the principle "from every man according to his abilities, to every man according to his needs". Small wonder that Leonard Barnes heard in the preamble "the clear accents of Moscow".⁽¹⁾

The preamble in point of fact was singularly ill-suited to the I.C.U. The class struggle and the confiscation of the means of production were meaningless in the South African

1. L. Barnes: Caliban in Africa; an Impression of Colour-Madness (London, 1930), p.97. The preamble must have been supplied by a member of the Communist Party, perhaps Buirski. (Cf. E. Roux: Time Longer than Rope, p.400).

racial situation. If the class struggle meant anything at all, it was a private war for whites only. The preamble for the I.C.U. came to be/a source of acute embarrassment, particularly in 1927, when it was anxious to prove its moderation and respectability. Grappling with the problem, one of the Union's leaders, A.W.G. Champion, came up with this surprising gloss upon the preamble:

"While many well-meaning sympathisers of the I.C.U. may be concerned at the exact meaning or effect of this Preamble, we are afraid that many people are using the Preamble as an excuse to attack the I.C.U., as they really object to the Native being organised in a Trade Union of any kind. But the real object of the Preamble (which we frankly admit could be better worded) is an attempt to put into modern language the teachings of Christ, namely 'Love thy neighbour as thyself', and prove and test it by conduct by 'Doing unto others as ye would they should do unto you'." (1)

The objects of the Union included the regulation of wages and conditions of labour, "irrespective of sex", the provision of legal assistance, the establishment of clubs, debating societies, etc., and the publication of "pamphlets, newspapers, or any other literature that may be deemed necessary ... for the material and spiritual welfare of the members".⁽²⁾ Two clauses are of particular significance.

"(d) To take shares in any syndicate ... and to establish such commercial enterprises as may be deemed necessary for the progress of the Organisation and its members."

"(f) To become attached to, or to federate with other Unions, and to be represented on public bodies or other Unions." (3)

1. A.W.G. Champion: The Truth about the I.C.U. (Durban, 1927) (Pamphlet), p.6.

2. Section 3 - Objects (a), (b), (g), (h).

3. Section 3 - Objects.

Clause (d) stemmed from the fact that many an African leader - and here Kadalie was a conspicuous exception - was an entrepreneur manqué and there was always a strong temptation to sink money in unsound co-operative schemes, land settlement schemes and business enterprises. Clause (f) conformed with the spirit of the preamble, looking forward to the forging of links with the white labour movement in South Africa or with the international labour movement, and confirming the change in the attitude of the I.C.U. towards political involvement.

The Union offered its members "sick, unemployment, old age, and death benefits",⁽¹⁾ but, while stipulating very explicit conditions for valid claims to death benefit, the Constitution has nothing to say about the other benefits, which seems to suggest that, in practice, they were never paid out. There was no uniform scale of death benefit for the whole Union, but a separate scale for each branch, varying "in accordance with the financial strength of such Branch". Moreover the costs of the scheme had to be borne by a special levy imposed by branches upon their members. Benefit was restricted to fully paid up members who had belonged to the Union for sixteen weeks. Those who died by their own hand or through "wilful negligence" or were epidemic victims were ineligible and, in the event of death at sea, "satisfactory proof of such death" was required.⁽²⁾

1. Ibid (c).

2. Section 22 - Death Benefit.

It is unlikely that many joined the I.C.U. for the social insurance services it offered. The financial obligations of the members, on the other hand, were heavy, an urban enrolment fee of two shillings for men and one shilling for women and a weekly subscription of six pence for men and three pence for women, and a rural enrolment fee of one shilling for both men and women and a weekly subscription of three pence. In addition the executive of the Union - the National Council - was empowered to impose levies upon the members.⁽¹⁾

Europeans were admitted to the Union but not allowed to hold office.⁽²⁾ There was provision for the admission of honorary members, who could attend branch meetings but not vote and who paid not less than five shillings a year but were entitled to no benefit.⁽³⁾

As far as the administration of the I.C.U. was concerned, the most important change was the abolition of the old General Executive Council and the establishment of a National Council, composed of the chief officers of the Union. These were the President, the Senior Vice-President, the Junior Vice-President, the National Secretary, the General Secretary, the Financial Secretary, three Trustees and the Provincial Secretaries, all chosen by the Annual Conference from among

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1. Section 4 - Enrolment Fees; Section 3 - Objects (i). Members received a membership card and a badge. (Section 14 - Uniform Badge).
 2. Section 3 (sic - two different sections have the same number) - Membership (b).
 3. Section 3 - Membership (c), (d) and (e).

those who had been members of the I.C.U. for at least three months.⁽¹⁾ The Board of Arbitration, composed of seven members of the National Council (including one Trustee) elected by the Conference, was left in being, meeting at Head Office from time to time and acting as a sort of executive committee of the National Council.⁽²⁾ The latter, which was required to meet once a year, prior to the Annual Conference, but could be summoned at other times should the Board of Arbitration think it necessary, exercised authority within the Union with disciplinary power over officials and branches, having the right to appoint, suspend or dismiss the one and the right to investigate and override, or even close, the other.⁽³⁾ It could impose fines and other penalties upon members violating the Union's rules and it alone had the right to call strikes, fix standard wages and conclude industrial agreements.⁽⁴⁾ However, ultimate authority was, of course, vested in the Conference, to which each branch was permitted to send one delegate for each two hundred paid up members, with a maximum of four delegates. The Conference was to be

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1. Section 7 - Officers of the Organisation; Section 8 - Government of the Organisation; Section 9 - Powers of the National Council. Oddly enough the Constitution has nothing to say about the size of the National Council, but merely lists its 1925 membership. A quorum was seven members including the President. In 1926 the National Council had nineteen members. (The Workers' Herald 28th April, 1926).
 2. Section 10 - Board of Arbitration.
 3. Section 9 - Powers of the National Council. Members were entitled to expenses and, during the meetings, a daily remuneration varying according to each member's daily wage, but not, as a rule, exceeding twelve shillings.
 4. Sections 13, 15 and 16 - Industrial Agreements, Standard Wage and Industrial Disputes.

summoned at a time and to a place decided by the National Council.⁽¹⁾

The President of the Union (J.G. Gumbs), the Senior Vice-President (A.M. Jabavu) and the Junior Vice-President (M.E.G. Johnson) were unpaid. The chief paid officer was the National Secretary, and his duties, as set out by the Constitution, seem to have been specially devised with Kadalie, who naturally filled the new post, in mind.

"The duties of the National Secretary shall be to propagate the policy of the Organisation, to convene and address meetings on any public platform with a view to protect and to further the aims and objects and interests of the Organisation; for which purpose he shall tour the Union of South Africa and beyond as authorised by the National Council, or the Board of Arbitration, acting on behalf of the National Council." (2)

His administrative duties were defined somewhat vaguely:- the supervision of branches, the presentation of an annual report, and the hearing of appeals from the decisions of Provincial Secretaries.⁽³⁾ The work of administration and control of Head Office staff fell to the General Secretary (James La Guma), who was supposed to keep a statistical register of members and a record of the proceedings of the National Council and the Board of Arbitration. It was his principal task to supervise the Union's finances, to submit

1. Section 21 - Conference. Delegates were to have their expenses paid by their branches. Section 21 lists Conference standing orders and rules of procedure, clauses (a) to (n).
2. Section 11 - Officers and their Duties.
3. Ibid. There is some slight discrepancy with respect to appeals. Section 19 - Branch Administration Regulations - provides for appeals to the Board of Arbitration, not to the National Secretary.

a financial statement to the National Council and the Conference and to supply all the information required by the auditor who was to be appointed every year by the Board of Arbitration.⁽¹⁾ The Financial Secretary (E.J. Khaile), for all his name, was merely a bookkeeper.⁽²⁾ The three Trustees (only two at first - J.J. Booise and B.C.R. Mazingi) were not concerned with financial administration, except that the signature of one of them was required for cheques.⁽³⁾ Their position was honorary and their function to hold I.C.U. property in trust.⁽⁴⁾

Financial administration bulked large in the Constitution. The income of the Union came chiefly from the enrolment fees and contributions of the members, supplemented by levies, which, however, were not popular.⁽⁵⁾ This revenue constituted the General Funds of the Union. Contributions were paid either into a branch office or to shop-stewards or collectors chosen by the branch executive. Shop-stewards were required to record every subscription received on the member's contribution card and to hand in, within forty-eight hours of receiving it, all money collected, for which duty they were

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1. Ibid; Section 12 - Funds of the Organisation.
 2. Section 11 - Officers and their Duties. The appointment of the National, General and Financial Secretaries was subject to three months' notice either side and the salary was to be fixed by the National Council.
 3. Section 12 - Funds of the Organisation. Cheques also had to be signed by the President and General Secretary.
 4. Section 11 - Officers and their Duties.
 5. Cf. The Workers' Herald 28th April, 1926.

paid a quarterly or half-yearly commission not exceeding two shillings in the pound.⁽¹⁾ It was the duty of the branch secretary to bank all money coming under the heading of General Funds within forty-eight hours of receipt for transfer to the Head Office account,⁽²⁾ and all the money required by the branches had to be requisitioned from Head Office.⁽³⁾ Branches were, however, permitted to maintain Reserve Funds, derived from social functions and approved business ventures and subject to periodic review by Head Office.⁽⁴⁾

Each branch had an elected chairman, vice-chairman and secretary, who, with eight others, made up an executive that was supposed to be representative of the different sections of workers in the branch.⁽⁵⁾ Branch secretaries, whose appointment required the sanction of the Board of Arbitration, could be put on salary (paid by Head Office) if their branches were sufficiently prosperous.⁽⁶⁾ Their functions, other than their financial duties, were left vague.

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1. Section 19 - Branch Administration Regulations. Some shop-stewards were paid a monthly wage and not a commission.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Section 12 - Funds of the Organisation.
 4. Section 20 - Branch Reserve Funds. Branches could hold property, which was the responsibility of branch chairmen and secretaries. (Section 19 - Branch Administration Regulations).
 5. Section 19 - Branch Administration Regulations. Officials were elected for a year, at the end of which they were normally eligible for re-election. They were subject to removal by a majority of members of the branch at a special meeting, and they were not allowed to hold meetings outside their branch area.
 6. Section 11 - Officers and their Duties.

"Branch Secretaries shall keep a correct record of all financial transactions and other proceedings of their respective Branches, and shall carry out as part of their duty such other reasonable demands as their respective Executives may impose." (1)

They were required to draw up a monthly financial statement to be approved by a three man finance committee (including the chairman) of the branch executive and sent on to the General Secretary.

The Provincial Secretaries constituted a new intermediate level in the administrative hierarchy. Their only duty that was clearly laid down was the submission of monthly reports and statements of expenditure of money requisitioned from Head Office. Otherwise they were "to propagate the cause of the Organisation in their respective Provinces" and to keep watch on the branches within their area.⁽²⁾ The imprecision of the Constitution in defining the functions of these officials and, indeed, of all officials, including the National Secretary, was pointed out in a report of March, 1926, submitted by the General Secretary, who expatiated upon the difficulties that arose as a result.⁽³⁾

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1. Section 19. The appointment of branch secretary was subject to one month's notice on either side. Nothing is said about their salary, whether, for example, it was uniform or varied according to the size of the branch.
 2. Section 11. Their appointment was subject to one month's notice on either side.
 3. General Secretary's Report of Inspection of Branches 6th March, 1926 (F 1926/6).

The first Provincial Secretaries were Theo B. Lujiza in East London (Transkei and Border), A.W.G. Champion in Johannesburg (Transvaal), James M. Dippa in Port Elizabeth (Eastern Province of the Cape), Alex Peddie Kajno Maduna in Durban (Natal) and H.D. Tyamzashe in Bloemfontein (Orange Free State).⁽¹⁾ The Western Province of the Cape, which did not have a Provincial Secretary while Cape Town was the headquarters of the Union, was subsequently run by John Gomas,⁽²⁾ and in 1927 another division was added, Griqualand West, under Doyle Modiakgotla.⁽³⁾ Tyamzashe did not long remain at Bloemfontein. After next serving for some months as Transvaal Provincial Secretary, he moved to Head Office as Complaints and Research Secretary, a post not provided for in the Constitution, and sub-editor of "The Workers' Herald," becoming Kadalie's most intimate and loyal supporter. As Provincial Secretary of the Orange Free State he was replaced by Champion, the strongest and ablest of all the I.C.U. leaders next to Kadalie himself.

A.W.G. Champion's background is best told in his own words.

"Mr. Allison Wessels George Champion ... was born of Zulu parents in 1893, near the mouth of River Tugela (sic), in the small Mission Station, Sans Souci. His father, George Champion, was adopted by an American missionary about 1935. Mr. Champion's mother could not read or write, not even in Zulu, but she was determined, like all good mothers, that her only son

1935?

1. Revised Constitution.

2. A Coloured man from the Malmesbury district of the Cape, where his father was a farm labourer. He himself was a tailor. He was a member of the Communist Party.

3. Minutes of National Council November, 1927 (1927/124).

should go to school and she was always interested in his education. Mr. Champion attended the Aman-simtoti Boys' School and passed standard VI. (1) But, being of a studious nature, he followed his studies while earning his living and, as he prefers to put it, the rest of his education and practical experience of the problems of life were picked up around the mine dumps of Johannesburg.

"After serving two years in the South African Police, Champion severed his connection with them to begin a new life on the mines. He was first employed by the Simmer and Jack Proprietary Mines as time-keeper.

"After an attack of malaria fever, which necessitated his returning home to Natal, he returned to Johannesburg and for two months was employed by Messrs. Stuttaford & Co. Ltd. He again went to the mines as time-keeper for the Roodepoort United Main Reef Gold Mines Co. Ltd., but left to try his luck as diamond digger at the Riversdale Diggings, Taungs. When he came back, a wiser but poorer man, he found employment at the Crown Mines as time-keeper and remained in their employ from 1919 to 1925. It was during these years and since that he has shown that he has, in a marked degree, the high qualities of leadership and began (sic) to find an outlet for his abilities in various ways of business and social service. He is one of the founders of the Joint Council of Europeans and Natives in Johannesburg, the Bantu Men's Social Centre, the Transvaal Mine Clerks' Association, and the United National Association of Commerce and Industry, Ltd. In all these he was honoured with many important appointments and was looked upon as a young man of great ability and of outstanding value in the various organisations.

"When he resigned his appointment at the Crown Mines to join the I.C.U. nearly all of his colleagues tried to prevent him from doing so and warned him of the risks he was taking, but he was always known as 'the lion-hearted young Zulu', and when the call came for leadership in the greater field of the I.C.U. he could not be kept back by any fears or threats of consequences. The Divine urge within him forced him to go forward to greater service for his people.

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1. There is a story that Champion was forced to leave school in 1913 without a certificate because he engaged in political activity. (H. Slater: A fresh look at the I.C.U. the case of Natal, Unpublished paper, University of Sussex, n.d., p.3).

"Mr. Champion ... is also a capable platform speaker. His methods are original and, having an excellent memory, he never uses a paper for reference, but stands on the platform without a note in his hand, talking straight from his heart to the hearts of his people, and the effect is most impressive ...

"Mr. Champion is not only a capable speaker, but he is also a fearless speaker and states the truth as he understands it, no matter who may be his audience ..." (1)

At first sight Champion's antecedents appear a poor qualification for high office in the I.C.U. Not only was he associated with organisations that were eminently respectable, but he was also, by his own account, acting, when his "Divine urge" began to trouble him, as a spy for his employers at I.C.U. meetings.⁽²⁾ His past career, however, is no guide to the complexity, even deviousness, of his character. Capable at time of apparent subservience and sycophancy, he had a sharp tongue and a keen sense of his own worth and dignity. As an indefatigable founder of organisations and businesses,⁽³⁾ he was less interested - in the case of the Joint Council and the Bantu Men's Social Centre - in their objectives than in finding, as he says, "an outlet for his abilities". When the I.C.U. presented him with an enlarged opportunity to exploit his talents, he forsook without much regret the respectable bodies with which he had been associated.

1. The Truth about the I.C.U., p.20-21, 22-23.

2. C. Kadalie: My Life and the I.C.U., Editors note 1, p.87-88.

3. There was also the Roodepoort Progressive Society (Cf. Transvaal Mine Clerks Association file, Forman Papers) and the Exempted Natives' Association of South Africa (Ilanga lase Natal 24th March, 1922). Champion was president of the Mine Clerks' Association, a body recognised by the Chamber of Mines, at the time of his joining the I.C.U.

Champion was only two months in the Orange Free State, where he was responsible for the prosecution of two I.C.U. officials, Simon Elias⁽¹⁾ and John Mancoe, who were accused of embezzling funds. One received a suspended prison sentence, the other was fined £25.⁽²⁾ At the end of September Champion moved to Durban to change places with Maduna, who was involved in a financial scandal to do with I.C.U. badges and was most reluctant to go to Bloemfontein.⁽³⁾ The new Natal Provincial Secretary encountered hostility from the Durban branch executive, from the Rev. John Dube^{and J.L.} F.L. Layman, the municipal official in charge of the town's African affairs, but it was not long before I.C.U. fortunes picked up.⁽⁴⁾ Soon Champion was bombarding Head Office with demands for membership cards and copies of the Constitution.⁽⁵⁾

Champion attended the 1925 Conference of the I.C.U. as "a distinguished visitor".⁽⁶⁾ This, the Fifth Annual Conference, the Third African Labour Congress, met in Johannesburg on Monday 13th April, 1925, and continued in session until the 19th. With the exception of the unhappy Bloemfontein

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1. Elias appears to have been an advocate. (The Workers' Herald 2nd April, 1925).
 2. Autograph fragment of Champion's in the Forman Collection.
 3. Ibid; A.W.G. Champion to C. Kadalie 18th January, 1926 (F/I.C.U. Copies of Letters/3; A.P. Maduna to A.W.G. Champion 22nd January, 1926 (F 1926/2)).
 4. Autograph fragment of A.W.G. Champion (Forman Papers).
 5. Series of unnumbered telegrams in Forman Collection.
 6. C. Kadalie: My Life and the I.C.U., p.73.

Conference of July, 1920, it was the first Conference held outside the Cape, lifting, as Kadalie put it, the "infant movement to the goal of National and International recognition"⁽¹⁾. It was attended by fifty-four delegates from fifteen branches and was presided over by J.G. Gumbs. For the first - and only - time in its history the I.C.U. secured the services of a mayor to open its Conference, an indication of the growing importance of the I.C.U. He hoped that a "kindly spirit of compromise" would prevail and urged the delegates to "go carefully step by step".⁽²⁾

What with the opening ceremonies and a dispute about procedure, no business was done on the first day of the Conference. The second day was given up to a consideration of the annual report of the National (previously General) Secretary and that of the Board of Arbitration, presented by James La Guma, and to a debate on the administration of the Union. A committee was appointed (A.M. Jabavu, J.G. Gumbs, A.D. Dilape, E.D. Khaile, A.P. Maduna, C. Kadalie, J.A. La Guma, M.E.G. Johnson, J.J. Booise and B.C.R. Mazingi) to "devise ways and means on the future administration of the Organisation as a whole", presumably to discuss the draft of the Revised Constitution. The day's proceedings were in camera.

1. The Workers' Herald 28th April, 1926.

2. The Workers' Herald 15th May, 1925, which claimed the I.C.U. Conference as "a real trade union congress" in comparison with the white labour conference earlier in the year, which "represented aristocracy of labour". J.S. Thaele attended, but ceased after that to play an active part in the I.C.U. There was evidently no quarrel because he appeared at an I.C.U. meeting at Pretoria in February, 1926. (The Workers' Herald 27th March, 1926).

On Wednesday 15th April the morning was devoted to debate upon the Wage Bill. While the delegates welcomed this measure in principle, they were highly critical of the proposed exclusion from its operation of agricultural labourers and domestic servants, amongst whom many I.C.U. members were counted. The Conference also wanted the categories of employment to which the Act would apply to be explicitly stated in order to diminish the discretion of the Minister of Labour, who might otherwise be subjected to party pressure in its exercise. It was decided to send a deputation to state the African case to the Select Committee on the Bill.⁽¹⁾

The afternoon was given up to a discussion of dockworkers' wages. The delegates wanted two things - the extension of the Cape Town rate of pay of eight shillings a day to the other ports and the termination of the practice at Cape Town of hiring dock labour by the hour or by the quarter day. M.E.G. Johnson complained that eight shillings a day (the celebrated eight shillings won by the I.C.U. in 1920) was "altogether inadequate to provide the workers with the necessary (sic) of life" and he wanted not only hiring by the day (regardless of the amount of work to be done) but also special rates for "the discharging and loading of heavy cargo such as sulphates and guano".⁽²⁾ The Board of Arbitration was authorised to make an approach to the Minister of Labour.⁽³⁾

1. C. Kadalie: My Life, p.75; I.C.U. to Select Committee May, 1925 (F 1925/2).

2. The Workers' Herald 15th May and 15th June, 1925.

3. Ibid; C. Kadalie: My Life, p.75-76, where the resolution passed is garbled.

In the course of the debate Alex P. Maduna made one of those blustering speeches that delegates at conferences were to come to expect of him.

"Should our demands be disregarded there is another course open to us, and that is to adopt our industrial weapon. We know what the policy of the Government is so far as we are concerned. It is to deal with us with the point of bayonet (sic) whenever we seek the slightest measure of justice." (1)

This brought protest and rebuke from Dippa and yet, strangely, support from the cautious and moderate Jabavu. (2)

There followed a debate upon the "civilised labour policy", which gave a superb opening for Kadalie's style of oratory.

"Here we have white people who have come out here with the professed idea of civilising the blackman. But by what means? Has civilisation ever been introduced into any country through the instrumentality of oppression, tyranny and the iron heel method to crush and grind down democracy? These people have come here to batten us, and live on the fat of the land. We did not go to Europe to invite the whites to come here, nor did we want them. No, but the whites, influenced by their own selfish ends, came along and we received them as good fellows. But to what purpose? To acquire what is known to them as civilisation, but to us and the freedom-loving world slavery ...

"Our people are being replaced by what we are told are poor whites, but let me tell you that they are not poor whites, but lazy --- ... The fact is that this civilised labour policy is nothing less than an attempt to oust you from every sphere of labour, and to place you in such a state as to imperil your very existence and exterminate you. The Government want to divide the African people, but I assure them that if Africans be true to themselves, support this union by becoming members of it, they won't succeed. We are determined that this country is, and is going to remain, our home ... The Government want this to be an exclusively white country,

1. The Workers' Herald 15th May, 1925.

2. Ibid.

"and that being so, it is up to us to organise and do something practicable so that we may be in a position to claim what are our just and lawful rights. We are going to defeat the white men in their purpose. The white man has been hitting us all along, and now we will hit him back. We must go on organising our people for if we don't then we will be driven to hell." (1)

After rousing the delegates to such an "animated fighting spirit", (2) Kadalie introduced a motion that was apposite and, if moderately phrased, vaguely threatening:

"That while fully realising that replacement of Natives by Europeans in state undertakings is the settled policy of the Government, and therefore without entering into any futile discussion of the pros and cons of the policy, this Conference of organised African workers most respectfully submit to the Government that in the absence of a definite scheme of land settlement as a compensating measure the enormity of injustice inflicted upon victims of this one-sided policy is incalculable and will positively provoke a deep-seated sense of resentment which the country will ill-afford to ignore." (3)

The session of Thursday 16th April began with an attack upon the system of recruiting contract labour, "this cruel system", by which "the Native workers were herded like animals in the Compounds along the Reef", where "their sleeping beds were nothing more other (sic) than cement floors". (4) A resolution was adopted comparing the work conditions of contract labourers with that of convicts and calling for an amendment of the Native Labour Regulation Act and for a conference with

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid; C. Kadalie: My Life, p.75; Rand Daily Mail 16th April, 1925.

4. The Workers' Herald 15th June, 1925.

the Minister of Labour to work out an alternative system.⁽¹⁾

The delegates then moved on to a consideration of the pass laws, especially their proposed application to African women, which was vigorously attacked by Comrades Mrs. Lande and Miss Mildred Ngcayiya, who, referring to one of the supposed advantages of the system, the control of loose women, "refuted emphatically that Native women were in any way immoral".⁽²⁾

The men added their quota of indignation. Clearly it was not only the humiliating restrictions of "this unchristianlike system" that were resented, but also the sheer cost of acquiring passes. The resolution passed in condemnation of the pass laws is interesting in two respects. For, firstly, it betrays the influence of the Communists, describing, as it does, passes as "an institution of the present capitalistic system of Government to reduce the African workers to a state of abject servility so as to facilitate their utmost exploitation"; and, secondly, it attacked the Johannesburg Joint Council of Europeans and Natives because it had attempted to devise a compromise formula that would lessen the burdens of the system but retain what were thought to be its advantages. The I.C.U. resolution demanded "total abolition" and threatened "a passive resistance movement ... with the co-operation of other organised bodies of the African peoples, particularly the African National Congress",⁽³⁾ though there appears to have

1. Ibid. The Conference also viewed "with alarm the practice followed by the Mine Companies of compelling the voluntary natives to work under contract as though they were recruited workers".

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

been some feeling that this was a political issue that was not really the concern of a trade union.⁽¹⁾

Most of Friday 17th April was taken up with the grievances of black mineworkers - the inadequacy of the compensation paid to the next-of-kin of miners who had died from accidents (£10),⁽²⁾ the colour bar to be entrenched by the enactment of the Mines and Works Act Amendment Bill ("a tacit admission that the European does not hold his superior position by virtue of his intellectual powers, but rather through discriminating laws enacted by a legislature in which the voice of the African is inarticulate"), and the exclusion of African mineworkers from the operation of the Industrial Conciliation Act.⁽³⁾ Finally, on the 17th, the delegates discussed the report of the select committee that had been appointed earlier in the Conference and presumably then approved the new Constitution. They proceeded to elect the Union's officers.⁽⁴⁾

On Saturday 18th April the new National Council met for the first time at the I.C.U.'s Johannesburg offices in Fox Street. The Workers' Herald was under discussion. It was agreed that the Union would subsidise the paper for six

1. The Workers' Herald 28th April, 1926.

2. The Workers' Herald 15th June, 1925.
The Government, however, was congratulated on its Miners' Phthisis Acts Consolidation Bill, which proposed to give better compensation to black victims of the disease.

3. Ibid. There was no protest against the exclusion of other classes of black workers.

4. Ibid.

months and that, in an effort to make it more widely read, more of it should appear in the vernacular languages. The idea of sending a man to England - "with a view of studying the World Labour Movement" - was discussed and found favour with the members of the National Council, who decided to call upon the branches to provide the necessary money.⁽¹⁾

The Fifth Annual Conference ended on Sunday morning with a customary outdoor demonstration.⁽²⁾

After the Conference Kadalie returned to Cape Town to lead a deputation to present the views of his Union to the parliamentary Select Committee on the Wage Bill. Since the deputation was not received by this Committee, the I.C.U. made do with the submission of a memorandum on African and Coloured wages, based upon the resolutions of the late Conference. Representatives of the Union, however, were received by the Minister of Mines and Industries, W.F. Beyers, who was presented with a protest on the Colour Bar Bill and a request for increased death benefit for Africans under the Miners' Phthisis Consolidation Acts Bill.⁽³⁾

Attention, however, after the Fifth Conference was fixed not on Cape Town, but on Bloemfontein. On the very day the Conference broke up there began a brief but bloody

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid; C. Kadalie: My Life, p.73-74.

3. The Workers' Herald 28th April, 1926.

riot there that was the second of the two blood-lettings associated with the I.C.U. It had in reality little to do with the Union, although "hotheads like Kadalie" were blamed for stirring up "mainly imaginary grievances".⁽¹⁾ The trouble originated in the attempted arrest of women who were brewing "Kafir beer" and became serious as the result of the death of one of the crowd that threw stones at a police detachment which was sent into the location to assert authority. On the next day, Monday 20th April, African pickets prevented those who wanted to from leaving the location and a thousand-strong crowd gathered. The authorities received a deputation - "not the leaders of the mob, but the responsible leaders of the native community"⁽²⁾ - which complained of police provocation, but promised to try and get the crowd to disperse. When it refused to break up, it was charged by a force of four hundred regular police and special constables. Four blacks died of bullet wounds and eighteen were injured, and two whites were severely hurt by stones. Seventy or so people were arrested. The whole affair provoked intense anger among Africans, who were particularly incensed by the part played in the affray by white civilians. "Every white man was walking around Bloemfontein with a rifle", complained one member of the deputation received by the authorities, "... some of the white people were always ready to kill the natives".⁽³⁾ Apart from the special constables who had been

1. Cape Times 21st April, 1925.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

largely responsible for the deaths and wounds during the attack on the location and had been rebuked by the magistrate for firing indiscriminately, other civilians had apparently joined in and, according to Colonel Beer, the Deputy-Commissioner of the South African Police, "hampered and embarrassed the police".⁽¹⁾ It seems likely, moreover, that a white bystander had fired the shot which mortally wounded the man whose death had caused the marked deterioration in the situation.⁽²⁾

It might be supposed that the I.C.U. cause was promoted by the fracas - on the principle of sanguis martyrorum semen collegii - but this seems unlikely because it was in fact an occasion of scandal. Keable 'Mote turned King's evidence against an arrested fellow I.C.U. member.'⁽³⁾ Yet the riots were not wholly disastrous for the Africans of the town. White people seem to have had an attack of conscience. The City Council granted the local branch of the I.C.U. a lease on a site in the location for the erection of a hall and office⁽⁴⁾ and employers became rather more sensitive to needs of their workers for higher wages. The Council set up a Native Wages Commission to inquire into and make recommendations on what constituted a "fair basic wage" for blacks doing unskilled work. The I.C.U. took the opportunity to put in a demand

1. Cape Times 22nd April, 1925.

2. Ibid.

3. The Workers' Herald 15th October, 1925.

4. F/Undated MSS/5.

for a daily wage of 6s.6d.,⁽¹⁾ but the Commission recommended 3s. and, as soon as the Wage Board was appointed in 1926, the Council asked that the Board make a determination in order to enforce the three shillings. The Wage Board met in 1927. Although Kadalie gave evidence and claimed a victory for the I.C.U., it is unlikely that the final determination owed much to the Union except in a somewhat negative way, in the sense that the Town Council took action in the first place at least partly for the sake of preventing it from taking advantage of discontent in the location.⁽²⁾

The I.C.U. also put forward wage demands in East London in 1925, asking for a two shilling addition to the daily wage. The Town Council received a deputation and expressed a willingness to raise wages if other employers would do the same. The Chamber of Commerce "made some frivolous excuses", while the local offices of the South African Railways and Harbours Administration suggested an approach to the General Manager. After the I.C.U. had submitted evidence about living costs in the city an offer of an extra sixpence a day was made.⁽³⁾

1. The Workers' Herald 15th May, 1926. The Chairman of the Native Wages Commission opposed the inclusion of Kadalie. (The Workers' Herald 27th March, 1926).

2. "... we wish to prevent any dissatisfaction taking root in the minds of Natives through instigations from representatives from Native organisations that they are not being fairly treated". (Union of South Africa: Report of the Native Economic Commission, p.152). Kadalie's account of the Bloemfontein wage award (My Life, p.69) is inaccurate in a number of ways.

3. The Workers' Herald 17th May, 1927.

In Johannesburg also the Union was active. It became involved in a minor industrial dispute in September, 1925, when the management of Maytham's Limited, a firm of tinsmiths, locked out its employees. The sixty workmen concerned called upon the I.C.U. for support and through the good offices of the Inspector of White Labour, who intervened after an appeal to the Native Affairs Department had achieved nothing, the dispute was settled in favour of the workers.⁽¹⁾ A careful scrutiny of the columns of The Workers' Herald shows that, as in Cape Town in its early years, the I.C.U. on the Rand investigated individual grievances and made representations to employers and the Native Affairs Department, taking legal action if necessary.⁽²⁾

It is clear, then, that in spite of its participation in the 1924 general election, its new association with the Communist Party and its adoption of the preamble of the I.W.W. constitution, the I.C.U. was behaving more or less as a general union might be expected to behave. The I.C.U. did not regard itself as a political body, but as the industrial wing of the black labour movement, of which the African National Congress was the political wing. "We ... call upon the workers", said an editorial in The Workers' Herald, "to sink all tribal

1. A.W.G. Champion: The Truth about the I.C.U., p.14.

2. Cf., for example, the case of the servant girl, Victoria, charged with desertion (The Workers' Herald 27th March, 1926) and the case of the Coloured man at Benoni for whom Kadalie is said to have obtained £80 compensation for the loss of a finger in an accident at work (The Workers' Herald 27th May, 1926).

jealousies and to fall in line with the only native labour organisation - the I.C.U., and should they desire to use political weapon (sic) we advise them to enrol as members of the African National Congress - the only political body we recognise ..."(1) However, the I.C.U. leaders found it impossible to stay out of politics because politics and economics were inextricably intertwined and because making speeches was Kadalie's chief interest and almost the only function enjoined upon him by the Constitution. Thus in January, 1925, he made his widely reported and discussed speech at Bloemfontein in which he threatened to make "such an agitation everywhere that Parliament House will tremble".(2) Then the Fifth Conference had talked of co-operation with other bodies in a passive resistance campaign against the pass laws.

Although Makgatho had been replaced in 1924 by Mahabane as President of the A.N.C. and the A.N.C. was increasingly restive, as was shown by its refusal to participate in the celebrations to welcome the visiting Prince of Wales,(3) Congress was not prepared to go as far in defiance as the I.C.U. claimed it was itself. In the agitation against the extension of the pass system to women it preferred a challenge in the courts - which was successful - to a campaign of passive resistance.(4) The situation, however, changed when

1. The Workers' Herald 15th May, 1925.

2. The Workers' Herald 20th February, 1925.

3. The Workers' Herald 15th May, 1925.

4. The Workers' Herald 15th May, 1925 and 28th April, 1926.

General Hertzog, in November, 1925, made his celebrated Smithfield speech. After a protracted gestation his "Native Policy", reached parturition. The principle was to be segregation of blacks from whites, the means four "Native Bills", first published in July, 1926, which, among other things, sought the removal of African voters in the Cape from the common electoral roll and the "substitution of a mock representation in the Union Parliament"⁽¹⁾ by white members of the Assembly elected on a limited franchise and with restricted legislative rights. There was also to be a General Native Council, elected on a limited franchise, with derisory powers. More land was to be set aside for Africans. Alarmed by the Smithfield speech, the African National Congress summoned a special congress to Bloemfontein and issued an invitation to the I.C.U. to attend.

Although the I.C.U. welcomed the A.N.C. initiative with enthusiasm,⁽²⁾ its delegates - Kadalie, Lujiza and Maduna - found much to criticise at the conference, which was held on New Year's Day, 1926. For one thing they thought there were too many whites - the magistrate and the superintendent of the location among others - on the platform.

"The I.C.U. went to Bloemfontein to put new life into the Congress. It was disgusting, however, to see that the whole morning was occupied listening to those white people who had no sympathy whatever with the black man.

1. The Workers' Herald 12th May, 1928.

2. The Workers' Herald 15th November, 1925.

"Another unsatisfactory feature of the Convention was the fact that it was overrun by ministers. Now, many of these ministers were compromisers ... Too much praying and reading of the Bible took up valuable time of the Convention. It seems that when these parson people attend a political conference their chief aim is to decide, who could pray the loudest and longest. When General Hertzog declared his Native policy, he did not waste half of the people's time in prayer. In fact the white man never prays when he is engaged in legislation or political conflicts ..." (1)

"The proletarian delegates, 'gingered up' the old political thoughts at Bleemfontein into action," said Clements Kadalie. (2) The action was a number of resolutions and the threat of passive resistance if the franchise were taken away.

Kadalie spent most of 1925 on the Rand, though Head Office remained in Cape Town. Early in June he was invited to attend the American Negro Labour Congress and, hastening back to Cape Town to consult the Board of Arbitration, was authorised to accept, but, as soon as he returned to Johannesburg, the Board changed its mind. (3) It seems likely that it was becoming impatient with its National Secretary;

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1. C. Kadalie's report on the conference in The Workers' Herald 20th February, 1926.
 2. The Workers' Herald 28th April, 1926.
 3. The Workers' Herald 28th April, 1926. Kadalie gives another version in his autobiography (p.79-80). "Immediately on receipt of this invitation, an application was made to the Department of the Interior for a passport to the United States of America. An acknowledgment was received from the department, but no passport was issued at the time. The I.C.U. National Council gave me the necessary leave of absence to proceed to America, but the Union Government did not issue the passport. The first invitation to proceed overseas did not therefore materialise."

or, if not then, certainly in the ensuing months. The vast majority of the National Council lived in the Cape Province; and there was Kadalie playing an independent rôle on the Rand, where he was ruling (with the assistance of his henchman, Tyamzashe, the Transvaal Provincial Secretary) Johannesburg branch as a personal fief, without a proper branch executive. There was not much that the National Council or the Board of Arbitration could do to keep Kadalie under control, since they met only intermittently, and it became even more difficult to keep him on a tight rein after the Head Office moved from Cape Town to Johannesburg (in April, 1926), while most of the National Council remained behind. What particularly angered the Board of Arbitration in 1925 was Kadalie's acquiring without its consent a hall - the Workers' Hall - on lease and running up a considerable debt in connection with it, a debt that had to be settled by the Board, "to save the situation and the prestige of the Organisation."⁽¹⁾

The Workers' Hall was opened in September, 1925. Three extraordinary sponsors were present at its opening, the Rev. B.R. Hattingh, a Nationalist M.L.A., who was most ill at ease with his two companions, W.H. Andrews, the Secretary of the Association of Employees' Organisations, the successor to the South African Industrial Federation, and C.F. Glass, Secretary of the Tailors' Association. The speeches of all three were impartially applauded by the audience despite their widely differing content. The Rev. Hattingh, who took care to point out that "the ~~meeting~~ had no political significance" sang the praises of segregation as the best guarantee to the African

1. General Secretary's Report of Inspection of Branches 6th March, 1926 (F 1926/6), p.2, 6. The Board of Arbitration was replaced in 1926 by a National Council Executive Bureau, composed of Kadalie, La Guma and Khaile.

that he would "develop on the right lines and according to his own interests and capabilities". He advised the I.C.U. members not to admit whites into their ranks, since they would only make use of them, and warned them against agitators, white and black. Altogether his speech was most extraordinary, quite out of touch with the mood of the I.C.U. and, in its hopes for the I.C.U. as a force for good, far removed from the opinion that most Nationalists had of the Union.

"You must not only look to the side of the employer to see that he does right to the worker, but you must always see that the worker does his duty towards his employer. You, too, must look to the social welfare of the whole native population; and help the good obedient native to build himself up. You must tell the native who does not want to be good that he does a great harm to the other natives. You must get at him and try to influence him to be better ... You must help your people to become better and better every day. An organisation of this kind is very good if it combines the interests of all the native workers. Through this organisation you can always put your difficulties and grievances before the right people. When you have grievances ... go to the head of the Government - the man that can and will assist you. It does not matter who that man is - for the head of the Government is the father of the people and he will always do the right thing in the best way ... You require the white man, the white man requires you. We must help one another, we must not mix together ..." (1)

Andrews, who said he spoke as an individual and not as Secretary of his Association, and Glass spoke about the virtues of organisation, and it is not surprising that Hattingh became somewhat agitated during Glass's speech.

"There are in South Africa two social classes ... There is the class which lives by its labour and the class which lives by exploiting them, but the natives and the white workers are still members of one class despite the fact that the colour of their skins

"happens to be different ... The native worker is a greater slave than the white man, but at the same time they are both slaves. That being the case, it is necessary that the white and native workers should mutually assist each other in order to improve their common lot ... It is not the white worker who is the enemy of the native; it is the capitalist, whether he be white or black ..." (1)

In the same month that the Workers' Hall was opened Kadalie, assisted by Tyamzashe and Champion, submitted a memorandum to the Economic and Wage Commission and gave oral evidence.⁽²⁾ The I.C.U. advanced the argument that black wages were too low and also condemned the existing system of recruiting for the mines and the conditions under which the mine labourers lived and worked. Typical budgets for African families in the principal cities were handed in as well.⁽³⁾ The leaders of the Union always looked back upon the evidence they gave to the Commission as one of their major achievements and considered that they had made a significant impression.⁽⁴⁾

"Although the Chamber of Mines, the Director of Native Labour (4) and the farmers (but particularly in the Eastern Province of the Cape) made futile and feverish efforts to repudiate our evidence before the Commission, it is a fact that for once in the history of South Africa, these human vampires were exposed to the outside world". (5)

1. Ibid.

2. The evidence was published as a pamphlet, but there appears to be no extant copy.

3. C. Kadalie: My Life and the I.C.U., p.74.

4. An official of the Native Affairs Department, at this time Major H.S. Cooke.

5. The Workers' Herald 28th April, 1926.

Half the Commissioners⁽¹⁾ would not have agreed that the "human vampires" had been exposed.

"We are unable ... to recommend the abolition of the compound system, the prohibition of organised recruiting, or the making of contracts of six months or more illegal ... Charges were made against compound managers and the larger recruiting organisations that were completely refuted by representatives of the persons charged. Similar charges were made against the Department of the Director of Native Labour, which were shown to be equally without justification; on the contrary, our investigation of them led us to form a high opinion of the sympathetic care and efficiency with which that Department performed its functions."
(S. Mills, H. Clay and J. Martin) (2)

However, the other three Commissioners were more sympathetic to the representations made by the I.C.U. They were on the whole opposed to recruiting and thought that there had been abuses, especially in the recruitment for agriculture in Natal.⁽³⁾ After suggesting the setting up of state employment bureaux for Africans looking for work,⁽⁴⁾ the Commissioners turned to the evidence presented by the I.C.U.

"Complaints of unjust, harsh and illegal treatment of natives in various industries and compounds were made to us by the native trade union - the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union. Into a number of these cases the Director of Native Labour, or his department, had made inquiries and several were found to have been correctly stated. This union claimed that natives do not receive sympathetic consideration of their grievances from many officials with whom they have to come in contact. It was not within our sphere to make a detailed examination of these complaints. Even if there is no ground for them, the fact remains that a belief in their reality does exist in the minds of a number of natives. There is always a danger, when large numbers of persons have to be dealt with, of treating complaints in an off-handed manner. Any discontent on the part of natives with the treatment

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1. The Commission produced two reports, each signed by three Commissioners. (Union of South Africa: Report of the Economic and Wage Commission (1925); U.G. 14 - 1926).
 2. Ibid, p.158.
 3. Ibid, p.331.
 4. Ibid, p.332.

"meted out to them is bound to affect their willingness to come out to work and their efficiency. From every point of view it is desirable that the most generous and careful consideration should always be given to complaints by natives." (W.H. Andrews, F.A.W. Lucas and W.H. Rood). (1)

Both reports issued by the Commission contained something of comfort for African workers, though it cannot be thought that the I.C.U.'s views carried much weight among those of the many witnesses giving evidence. The whole Commission, Mills, Clay and Martin emphatically, the others cautiously, admitted the impossibility of achieving economic segregation. "We assume that the ultimate destiny of, at any rate, a majority of the native population of South Africa is to be absorbed in and assimilated to the economic system which Europeans have introduced." (Mills, Clay and Martin).⁽²⁾ "As far as the detribalised natives are concerned it would appear to be too late for any other policy than that of adoption into the European economic system." (Andrews, Lucas and Rood).⁽³⁾

Both groups of Commissioners accepted the view that unskilled wages were too low and work opportunities for blacks too restricted.⁽⁴⁾ While Mills, Clay and Martin were clearly in favour of bringing black wage earners under the

1. Ibid, p.332.

2. Ibid, p.155.

3. Ibid, p.323.

4. Ibid, p.171, 282.

protection of statutory wage fixing procedure,⁽¹⁾ the other three Commissioners, including Lucas, who was appointed the first chairman of the Wage Board, were in favour of a repeal of Section 3, sub-section 3, of the Wage Act, which laid down the "civilised habits of life" criterion for wage recommendations by the Wage Board, because they thought that the application of that criterion would merely cause delay whenever the Board was unable to make a recommendation.⁽²⁾ Furthermore, Mills, Clay and Martin thought that "a complete survey of the economic position of the native people" should be undertaken.⁽³⁾ The delay by the Government in taking up this suggestion became the subject of complaint by Africans.⁽⁴⁾

Altogether 1925 was a very full year for the I.C.U., a year when it attracted much publicity. "It is not out of place here," says Kadalie modestly in his autobiography, "to characterise the 1925 session of Parliament as the 'Kadalie Session' or, in other words, 'the I.C.U. Session'."⁽⁵⁾

1. "There remains for consideration the class of natives employed in European centres, who are detribalised and wholly dependent on the wages they can secure ... These have no reserve to fall back on, and require, therefore, the same legislative protection as is needed by the weaker members of the European and coloured wage-earning class. Any wage regulation imposed on manufacturing industry and commerce by law should include these detribalised natives, wherever they are employed in any numbers." (Ibid, p.158).

2. Ibid, p.296.

3. Ibid, p.9.

4. The Workers' Herald 17th May, 1927.

5. Op.cit., p.72.

Undoubtedly Kadalie was a thorn in the side of the Government and Hertzog was losing patience. In the new session of Parliament, in March, 1926, he introduced a Prevention of Disorders Bill, popularly known as the Sedition Bill, aimed at curbing inflammatory speeches and publications.⁽¹⁾ This, however, increased the Prime Minister's difficulties rather than provided a solution to his problem. The Bill caused so much uneasiness among the Labour supporters of the Pact that, at the second reading, it was referred to a select committee.⁽²⁾ A.G. Barlow of Bloemfontein expressed the feelings of his colleagues when he said:

"This is most dangerous legislation, legislation which will stop Labour members, trade union leaders, and other representatives of the working classes, from making no different speeches to what they are making to-day." (3)

The Bill would, he thought, make strikes into sedition and prevent blacks from forming trade unions. He went on to defend Kadalie.

"I want to ask the friends of the natives here to-day what they are going to do about this class of legislation. As soon as the native worker agitates in favour of trade unions it is sedition, but if he agitates politically, as Dr. Abdurahman and other South African party men agitate, it is good politics and a good South African party stunt. A good deal has been said about Clements Kadalie. Is there any man in this House who could get up and say from his own knowledge that Clements Kadalie has ever said anything that is seditious? I have gone to the trouble of seeing Kadalie, of speaking to him and of reading his speeches, and I cannot find anything in his speeches which is seditious." (4)

1. Union of South Africa: Debates of the House of Assembly, 1926, Col.1900, 2056.

2. Ibid, Col.2054-2055.

3. Ibid, Col.2065.

4. Ibid, Col.2066.

The Select Committee reported on 22nd April, 1926, but the Bill was dropped, to reappear the following year as the Native Administration Bill.

Shortly before the dropping of the Sedition Bill, having apparently already made up its mind that the Bill furnished no solution to its problem, the Government decided as a temporary expedient to place limitations upon Kadalie's freedom of movement. The National Secretary was told of this decision verbally just before the I.C.U. Conference was due to meet. This, the Sixth Annual Conference of the Union and the Fourth African Labour Congress, was held at the Workers' Hall in Johannesburg from 5th to 11th April and was attended by more than ninety delegates. The President of the A.N.C. sent a telegram of support. The South African Trades Union Congress, the successor to the Association of Employees' Organisations, declined to send an official to open the Conference⁽¹⁾ and the only dignitary found to perform the ceremony was the eccentric Colonel F.A. Silburn, a former Natal M.L.A. and an advocate of racial purity, whose speech seems to have left his audience somewhat bewildered.⁽²⁾

On the week-end preceding the opening of the Conference the National Council met, its deliberations being prolonged

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1. It also refused to accept - as "premature" - the offer of a fraternal delegate from the I.C.U. at its own conference. (The Workers' Herald 28th April, 1926).
 2. His ideas were expounded in his book South Africa; White and Black - or Brown?

throughout the night. It must have been an invidious meeting, because it involved a dispute about the disposal of the Union's money and had some bearing upon the removal of the Head Office to Johannesburg, a move that was unpopular in Cape Town. It appears that a plot had been hatched, in which Gumbs and La Guma were implicated, to prevent the National Secretary from removing the funds to Johannesburg, which, if unconstitutional, was understandable. Kadalie was able to use the support of those members of the National Council who did not come from Cape Town, including the Financial Secretary, Khaile, to thwart the plot. There was some risk of secession, which did not, however, materialise.⁽¹⁾

On Monday morning the Conference listened to the presidential address and the National Secretary's annual report and it was not until Tuesday that the delegates got down to business. The opening debate was on the Colour Bar Bill, which had twice been defeated in the Senate. After Kadalie had reaffirmed the non-racial policy of the I.C.U., Champion, having voiced his thanks to the Senate for throwing the Bill out, warned that, if it became law, it would

"ingrain, to an alarming extent, a sense of grievance and precipitate a rupture in almost all future deliberations between the Government and the Native population." (2)

The gratitude to the Senate felt by the Natal Provincial Secretary was not shared by John Gomas, who saw it as the representative of big business interests that were opposed to an industrial colour bar, not for any disinterested reasons, but "to open further avenues for exploitation."

1. C. Kadalie: My Life and the I.C.U., p.81-83.

2. The Workers' Herald 28th April, 1926.

Though naturally united in their detestation of the Colour Bar Bill, the delegates were not united in their attitude to the suggested remedies open to the black labour movement. Loose, but well defined, groups emerged during the Conference, the Moderates, "whose policy was to face facts and to deliberate soberly and moderately on them"; the Die-hards, "whose policy was that 'Nay was Nay and Yea was Yea'"; and the Ginger Group, "composed of all the young bloods, their policy was 'Direct Action'". In short, there were the Moderates, the Radicals and what one might almost call the Lunatic Fringe. The known Gingerists were Keable 'Mote (re-admitted to the Union after his betrayal of the previous year), T.W. Thibedi, formerly of the International Socialist League and the Industrial Workers of Africa, Thomas Mbeki, Dixon Mogaecho and John Gomas.⁽¹⁾ Mbeki, Thibedi and Gomas were members of the Communist Party, but two other Communists, La Guma and Khaile, were Die-hards. Champion was a Die-hard, while Kadalie, though unlabelled, tended to support the middle group against the Moderates, who were mostly from the Eastern Province and whose principal spokesmen were Theo Lujiza and James Dippa. In the debate on the Colour Bar Bill, the Die-hard Champion expressed himself in favour of opposition by boycott, by which he meant withdrawal from "Advisory Boards and all other such obscure bodies".⁽²⁾ Mbeki the Gingerist also favoured

1. There is some uncertainty about Gomas, who was also described as a Die-hard.

2. The Workers' Herald 28th April, 1926.

the boycott, by which he, however, meant passive resistance.⁽¹⁾ His fellow Gingerist, 'Mote, wanted "something revolutionary. Let us show the Government that we do not only threaten, but can act as well."⁽²⁾ Two speakers, Khaile and M.E.G. Johnson, the Junior Vice-President, insisted on the need for black representation in Parliament.

On the afternoon of Tuesday 6th April James Dippa moved a resolution of great importance.

"That in view of the rapid development in the introduction of fundamental changes in the Native policy under consideration, and in view of the seemingly compromising attitude of the European population on a whole (sic), particularly as regards the Prime Minister's Smithfield declarations, this conference instructs the National Council of the I.C.U. to enter into negotiations for the affiliation of this organisation to the British Trade Union Congress, with the further object of bringing the case of the African worker before the League of Nations and public opinion in Europe." ⁽³⁾

The significance of this resolution was that the black labour movement was abandoning hopes of itself ameliorating its situation, and instead was appealing to external forces, not to the Imperial Government, which had ignored the petitions of the African Congress, but to the British labour movement and through it to the international labour movement. In his contribution to the motion the National Secretary spoke of "the white workers of Britain, who are not narrow-minded like

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

most of our South African white comrades, and who have great influence universally".⁽¹⁾ Events in South Africa compelled the blacks "to go elsewhere for help".⁽²⁾ Kadalie instanced the "Sedition Bill" and declared

"We are already in touch with British workers, and our application would (sic) probably be discussed at their next conference. If that application materialises the South African whites would (sic) have to meet us on even terms." ⁽³⁾

The Natal Provincial Secretary, speaking in support, said he would like to see a delegate sent overseas if the money could be found.

The motion was carried. It is significant that it had been seconded by Thibedi, the Johannesburg Communist and Gingerist, and supported by that other Gingerist, 'Mote.

Delegates went on to condemn the Sedition Bill as "a public danger", "diabolically iniquitous". "Even Jesus Christ would have been arrested under the provisions of this Bill". ('Mote)⁽⁴⁾ When, however, a Die-hard from Johannesburg moved that "Mr. Tielman Roos⁽⁵⁾ be arrested for inciting the workers of South Africa to public violence, and for promoting hostility between different races"⁽⁶⁾ (the crimes

1. Ibid.

2. Reports of speeches in The Workers' Herald invariably wavered between oratio obliqua and oratio recta.

3. The Workers' Herald 28th April, 1926.

4. Ibid.

5. The Minister of Justice.

6. The Workers' Herald, 28th April, 1926.

defined by the Bill), he was compelled to withdraw his motion - whatever he meant by it - and the official one was passed instead. "It was the object of the workers," said another Die-hard, A.P. Maduna, "to constitutionally overthrow capitalism."⁽¹⁾

On Wednesday 7th April the Cape Town Communists, La Guma and Gomas, launched an attack upon the Government's segregation policy, proclaiming the solidarity of working class interests and the danger that segregation brought to white workers as much as black. Parliament, they alleged, was the instrument of the capitalists, who exploited race prejudice to the detriment of workers of all races. The "white workers sell their principle for the little favour they receive from the capitalists" (La Guma).⁽²⁾ "Segregation fosters the separation of workers, and the white workers look upon themselves as an aristocratic class in comparison with the blacks" (Gomas).⁽³⁾ The speakers that followed concurred, of course, in their condemnation of the policy, though differed in their explanation of its antecedents. Delegates were still disinclined to attack General Hertzog and it was Smuts that was the target of wrath.

"When General Smuts", said another delegate, a Johannesburg Die-hard,

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

"went to England he declared that the Natives of South Africa were endeavouring to overthrow the whites. He said so in his speech at that famous Savoy Hotel in London because he had not the pluck of a fowl to face his iniquity. Hertzog, however, though a political maniac, had (sic) the courage to disclose his policy - wicked as it is." (1)

The irrepressible 'Mote "let go some of his hot air again", that is talked about a revolution, and had to be "sharply pulled up by the chairman, and severely rebuked by Comrade Jabavu." (2)

After condemning the Industrial Conciliation Act and the pass laws, whose operation excluded most Africans from the benefits of the Act, the Conference discussed the Pact Government's civilised labour policy. The Senior Vice-President, A.M. Jabavu, introducing a motion of condemnation, said that

"it was most unfair that after the Natives helped to build up the industrial machinery of this country that (sic) they should now be replaced by 'can't works' and 'won't works' ... On the cargo boats and in all avenues of hard labour the Native is easily the best man, and, taking labour circumstance all round, it could safely be said that when European muscles have failed the Native has stepped in - and succeeded too." (3)

The African people, he continued, contributed abundantly to the revenue of the state, relatively more abundantly than Europeans to railway revenue, and were entitled to employment, including government employment. The Government had no right to solve the poor white problem at the expense of blacks, a

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

point, Jabavu claimed, that had already been made by the Auditor-General.⁽¹⁾ Speakers that followed cited instances of dismissal of Africans on the railways and the transfer of African railway clerks to manual labour to make way for Europeans. Blaauw, a Coloured man from Adelaide, digressed to speak of the low wages paid to farm labourers, as little as ten shillings, or even five shillings, a month and of the difficulty Africans had in paying from such wages their poll tax. This last point was taken up by a delegate from Port Elizabeth, Jonas, who pointed out that it had been a heavy enough burden with a ten shilling tax, but this now had been doubled. J. Mzazi of East London, with some sarcasm, wanted to know what the Africans' "war debt was, because all defeated nations had to pay and then they were given equal rights and freedom."⁽²⁾ Yet it was not the Africans who had "committed any breach of international peace. It was the white man who forcibly and hypocritically entered the Native's domains."⁽³⁾

The Cape Town delegates, M.E.G. Johnson, a West African, and John Gomas, a Cape Coloured man, indignantly denounced the Government for fostering a division between Africans and Coloured people. Gomas and two other Capetonians, both Coloured men, and adverted upon the pro-Nationalist Coloured organisation, the African National Bond, and the Government agents Veldman and Le Grange, who were recruiting Coloured

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

workers for the Cape Town docks to replace Africans.

Johnson, who had earlier expressed his distaste for the very terms Native and Coloured as a device for splitting up "the African race still further",⁽¹⁾ bitterly attacked the pass system.

"The pass was no protection to the South African Natives; if it was any protection then all these white foreign blood-suckers in the country should be made to wear an identification badge round their necks. At any rate the pass is a shameful thing I must go, otherwise we shall reluctantly be compelled to adopt passive resistance." (2)

And Gomas, in a forceful and fluent speech:

"It was the Government's action that compels the people to speak immoderately, and when that happens the Government turns round and introduces such stone-age laws as the Sedition Bill ... These laws, far from restoring peace and goodwill, create criminals. The Government creates ill-feeling between the Coloured and Native people, by recruiting Coloured loafers from the country to replace the Natives at the docks. These loafers are misled into thinking they are white people. Veldman, who draws a princely salary of £20 from the Government, goes round the country glorifying the Government and recruiting Coloured waifs to work at the docks. Both Le Grange and Veldman confuse the issue by running down the I.C.U. and Congress, and the people at present do not know where they are." (3)

The discussion moved to the minimum wage question.

What was to be done? Speaking in character Keable 'Mote "passionately urged for a movement of passive resistance.

'Let us all be arrested.'"⁽⁴⁾ Alex. P. Maduna, the Orange Free State Provincial Secretary and a Die-hard, claimed that

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

at Bloemfontein "he could engineer a strike at any time. Mere resolutions do not always carry weight, direct action was sometimes wanted."⁽¹⁾ This, however, found little favour. A Johannesburg Die-hard who said he had been sentenced to five years imprisonment after the failure of the Johannesburg strike of 1919⁽²⁾ warned that the Government would simply call out the troops. Theo Lujiza, a Moderate, advised the I.C.U., before calling a strike, to consider whether the time was really ripe; or, at least, if it was set on a strike, to make it a general strike.⁽³⁾ He claimed that his people in East London were ready for a strike. James Dippa, on the other hand, said that he had discouraged strikes at Port Elizabeth and that the best course open to the Union was to win over the chiefs. He was followed by another Port Elizabeth delegate, who complained about the recent poll tax increase; and it was at that point that Kadalie intervened to complain about the spinelessness of the Eastern Province officials.

"In the Eastern Province, where they quarrel over a bone without meat, if they have (sic) the same backbone as Comrade Maduna, they would succeed. If we found that people were unable to pay their taxes the I.C.U. slogan should be that they were entitled to 'demand'." ⁽⁴⁾

He went on:

"Strike was the only weapon of the workers in modern times,

but prudently added that it

"should not be played with or grossly encouraged before the workers were properly organised." ⁽⁵⁾

1. Ibid.

2. Presumably the anti-pass campaign was meant.

3. Ibid.

4. Presumably "entitled to make demands". (Ibid).

5. Ibid.

The National Secretary's intervention earned him a rebuke from the Senior Vice-President, A.M. Jabavu. "Comrade Kadalie", he said,

"lacked experience about Eastern Province conditions. Bloemfontein and the Eastern Province differed to a considerable extent. There were no real rural Natives in Bloemfontein or Johannesburg, the inhabitants of these places being mostly of the amarumsha or 'intellectual' class: they knew all about taxes and it was very easy to organise them. Dippa acted wisely because had he allowed a strike, employers could have obtained thousands of workers within five miles from Port Elizabeth, and the unemployed Natives would have been thrown on the shoulders of the I.C.U. ... There should be no isolated strikes because the I.C.U. has branches all over the country now. Strike should be the last word, and should not be thought of until all other constitutional methods were exhausted, and if Bloemfontein or other centres were ready, they should mark time with the less advanced centres, until they could all speak with one voice. The Cape was very slow, and could hardly do anything even for their own benefit." (1)

Angrily Kadalie claimed that he "knew the Eastern Province throughout, and would not be taught by anyone about the psychology of the people of that province. He also knew that they were oppressed."⁽²⁾ At this point he was interrupted and some disorder ensued. For the National Secretary was ruled out of order since no one was permitted to speak more than once on any one subject. But although Champion "demanded that the rules of debate must be followed, no matter whether the heavens fall",⁽³⁾ Kadalie was willing to run that risk and was difficult to quieten.⁽⁴⁾ 'Mote took advantage

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid. Kadalie was generally in hot water on this particular day. Later on he was "pulled over the coals" by A.M. Jabavu for "leaving the House without the Chairman's permission." He was therefore hardly the autocrat he was alleged by the Communists to be.

of the confusion to demand strong action, with the result that an exasperated delegate requested the chairman, A.M. Jabavu, to "ask that man to sit down, or ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to bundle him out head first."⁽¹⁾

When the discussion resumed, one of the delegates of Cathcart, Cape Province, put in a plea for the farm labourers, whose position, he said, had deteriorated since the previous conference. These, like certain other categories of workers, the Junior Vice-President reminded the Conference, were excluded from the operation of the Wage Act, and it was they who had the most grievances.

"It was the duty of the Conference to devise ways and means to compel Government to bring excluded sections under the Act. Conditions prevailing in the different provinces have (sic) first of all to be studied before any steps are taken. He advised his Bloemfontein and Transvaal colleagues that the time was not yet ripe for a strike." ⁽²⁾

The I.C.U., he said, was simply not strong enough.

The debate continued on Thursday morning. The question of striking arose again, only to be dismissed. When Thabedi of the Ginger Group said he agreed with Jabavu that the strike was to be used only as a last resort, the latter insisted that the Cape was not ready for it and that the only way to operate was through the Wage Board, and he testily called upon the National Secretary or the Bloemfontein representative to explain the situation there, adding that, if they were

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

unable to explain, then the wage question should not be discussed at all. Thereupon the National Secretary, who rejected the idea put forward by some delegates of a minimum wage for the entire country, reviewed the state of the wage negotiations in both Bloemfontein and East London. His report led to a discussion of the Wage Board. John Gomas expressed some impatience with the policy of having recourse to it, and in this he received support from President Gumbs, who was also sceptical about the effectiveness of the Wage Board for unskilled labour and was in favour of pressing for a country-wide minimum wage. The Wage Board was defended by Maduna and by Khaile.

There followed a very lengthy debate upon the system of recruiting labour for the mines. The main speaker was A.W.G. Champion, who began by saying that he had worked on the mines for ten years and therefore could be considered an expert on working conditions there. He continued:

"Recruited mine labourers are like slaves, who cannot choose their sphere of labour, the food they would like to eat, and where they would like to sleep. No questions are to be asked, otherwise the sjambok and boot would be introduced ... usury and extortion were largely practised in the compounds, and many poor Natives pay as much as 15 per cent. on loans offered them by the indunas. In some cases men have to work for six months before they were clear of debt ... he had seen men die in mine hospitals without proper care being taken of their cases. The underground white overseers had no human feeling in them ... In many cases where Natives earn 50/- per month, they do the work of skilled white men, who would have been entitled to £20 per month ..." (1)

1. The Workers' Herald 15th May, 1926.

Speaking in support, the delegate from King William's Town, A.M. Jabavu, attacked the system from the other end, the abuses in the recruiting grounds.

"Down in the native territories, where most of the mine labourers came from, conditions were appalling, and through the economic pinch many Natives have to sell themselves to traders ... The recruiting system was sheer profiteering on the part of the traders in Native territories. As a matter of fact these recruiters get about two pounds per man and the agent gets another two pounds, and when the labourer finally entrains, he is in debt almost to the amount of five or six pounds, and in the end the man may find himself facing a debt of ten pounds before he has even entered the mine ... the recruiting system should be boycotted, and probably both the Government and the Chamber of Mines will devise better means of dealing with Native labour. At present the Chamber of Mines prefers the Portuguese Native, not because he is more efficient but because he works for half the wages of the Union Natives, and he can stand more humbug and kicks ... the first claim for labour lies with the Union Natives, and the Portuguese Natives should be told to look for work in their own country." (1)

Mbeki, describing the recruiting system as a "diabolical capitalist system", took up Jabavu's suggestion of a boycott and said that the I.C.U. should persuade the chiefs to discourage enlistment, just as he had done in the case of three northern Transvaal chiefs. The Gingerist received support from the Moderate Dippa, who confirmed the allegations of Champion and Jabavu that traders in the territories and indunas in the mines forced upon the labourers high interest rate loans that, in the case of the traders, took the form of overpriced goods from their stores. Dippa, who had worked as a clerk on the Crown Mines, enlarged upon the evidence of the previous speakers.

1. Ibid.

"In the compounds recruited Natives had no vote. When he was at the compounds clerks and other indunas got up at 4 or 5 a.m. to wake the Natives, who were sjamboked or kicked into line to go 'down below'. He had made many protests against this kind of thing, but it carried no weight, as most of the head indunas were only out to please the compound manager, and the latter was an uncrowned king because he knew that he was immune from attack. Many Natives do not get the exact job they join for and even if they do, there is still that iniquitous system of 'loafers' tickets', which means that unless a man drills 24 inches, including a great amount of shovel work, his ticket is not recognised, although the 'boss' gets paid for the space 'cleared' by this man.

"... he knew portly 'niggers' with big stomachs who get everything out of the poor Native labourer. These 'big blokes' sell all kinds of liquor, but not a single compound policeman dreams of interfering, because the moment he does so his life on the mine is as good as a 'dead letter' ...

"There are inspectors of the Native Affairs Department who visit the mines, but when they arrive to receive or redress grievances, they generally find that the compound manager, aided by his black dupes, has already a 'cut-and-dried' case, because not only have the indunas been bribed and demoralised but even our chiefs who pay Johannesburg a visit are often taken to the W.N.L.A. (Witwatersrand Native Labour Association) and gorged with meat or Kaffir beer, and these chiefs generally leave Johannesburg no wiser than when they arrived. There exists on the mines a bonus for over-time to a certain extent, and many Natives leave the Rand without claiming this bonus because they know nothing about it. Seeing that this money is seldom claimed, or paid out, it returns to the mines and is utilised to feed and gorge the chiefs and other dupes of the Chamber of Mines when they come to Johannesburg. This kind of thing must be exposed and these portly 'niggers' with big stomachs should be kicked sky-high, and honest men put in their places." (1)

The National Secretary complained of another alleged abuse of the recruiting system, the abduction of men for work in the Natal sugar plantations. He revived the old idea of

1. Ibid.

I.C.U. operated labour bureaux and suggested these as a substitute for the recruiting agencies, whose activities, he claimed in passing, had been adversely affected by the propaganda carried on by the I.C.U. in the King William's Town area.⁽¹⁾

Mzazi, a Die-hard from East London, said it was silly to talk of boycotting the recruiting system unless the workers could be provided in some other way with their fares to the mines. He described the existing recruiting arrangements in the Transkei and suggested a possible remedy. "The Magistrates, the traders and the Chamber of Mines," he alleged,

"were 'pals'. After the reaping season the Magistrates compel people to pay their taxes, knowing full well that they had no money, and that they would be compelled to sell their mealies for 8/- per bag or even less, and in many cases they were compelled by circumstances to exchange bags of mealies for worthless shop goods. At least four bags have to be sold in order to pay the Government tax. Shortly after reaping season, the Native has no food, and is forced to buy his own mealies back at £1 for a half-filled bag. He goes on buying his own mealies back on credit until he is hopelessly in debt. The trader, who is also a recruiter, now steps in and demands his money. The position is obvious; the man has either to go to the mines or have his cattle sold ... He failed to see how the National Secretary's proposal of labour bureaux would help, because when most Natives come (sic) up to the mines they were already in debt. The only way to smash the recruiting system was to open country stores so as to feed the people and lend out money on security at reasonable rates of interest. If this proposal is (sic) followed the I.C.U. would be rich in one year, and the traders would have to 'get out of it'." (2)

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

The debate upon the recruiting system broke off when Kadalie intervened to read out the letter from the Native Affairs Department confirming the restriction placed upon his movements. Tinker of the Communist Party, who happened to be present, was invited by Gumbs to speak. After saying how "he longed for the day when black and white will meet to discuss the affairs of the workers of the world", he urged the delegates to aim at a larger membership than the fifty thousand sought by the National Secretary.

"There were dark clouds gathering round the workers of South Africa, and the first flash of lightning was the ban on Mr. Clements Kadalie ... it is certain that should the storm break Mr. Kadalie and some other leaders will be arrested. Now that was the time when the I.C.U. should put thousands more in the field of propaganda. Such a move would render any Government helpless, and only such a move would help to overthrow capitalistic oppression." (1)

Two more motions were introduced before the open sessions of the Conference came to an end. The first, which-as it had the year before - encountered some opposition and had to be referred to the National Council, proposed the celebration of May Day. It naturally received support from the Ginger Group and was subsequently adopted.⁽²⁾ The second was a vote of thanks to the Johannesburg newspaper, The Star, for "its impartial and educational reports of the proceedings of the Conference".⁽³⁾ The Conference sat for the rest of its deliberations in camera.

1. Ibid.

2. It was not, however, easy to show proletarian defiance of the capitalist system on May Day, because it was a public holiday anyway.

3. The Workers' Herald 15th May, 1926.

After the Conference rose Clements Kadalie was unable to make his usual jaunt round the country because of the ban. He did not comply with a resolution passed by the Conference before it disbanded instructing him to travel to Natal, which he was specifically forbidden to enter,⁽¹⁾ with the returning delegates from that province. Loyal telegrams, such as one from Cape Town, "We must prepare face imprisonment of Kadalie for not being allowed to organise",⁽²⁾ did not spur him on. It is not easy to determine the exact nature of his ban and to discover upon what statutory authority the Native Affairs Department was relying. The Government, it appears, insisted that outside the Cape Province, where Kadalie was a registered voter, he must be subject to the pass laws,⁽³⁾ which meant that he had to carry a pass in the Orange Free State and Transvaal and, under Natal Law 48 of 1884, obtain an "inward pass" whenever he entered Natal.⁽⁴⁾ Bunting advised the National Secretary to test the law in the Transvaal and then test it in Natal by entering without a pass.⁽⁵⁾ Accordingly he made

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1. It is possible that the authorities were particularly sensitive about the spread of disaffection among the Zulus - or sensitive to the monomaniacal fears of J.S. Marwick, M.L.A. about the I.C.U. *although he was persona non grata as far as the govt. was concerned*
 2. The Workers' Herald 28th April, 1926.
 3. C. Kadalie: My Life, p.86; President, Senior Vice-President, National Secretary and General Secretary to Branch Secretaries 22nd April, 1926 (F 1926/8).
 4. The Workers' Herald 28th April, 1926.
 5. Cowley and Cowley to A.W.G. Champion 15th June, 1926 (F 1926/15).

an application for a certificate of exemption from the operation of the Transvaal pass laws under Ordinance 28 of 1902. For a long time he heard nothing.⁽¹⁾ At last, in August, his application was rejected on the ground that, in the opinion of the Minister of Native Affairs, he was "not a Native deserving of the privilege". He re-applied to the Sub-Native Commissioner and Chief Pass Officer in Pretoria, who said that he was unable to issue the certificate for the reason already given by the Minister. Thereupon Kadalie applied for a court order requiring the Pass Officer either to grant the certificate or "to acquaint the applicant of any evidence prejudicial to his application and to afford him an opportunity of correcting or contradicting such evidence." But the case did not come on until August of the following year.⁽²⁾

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1. C. Kadalie to A.W.G. Champion 22nd July, 1926 (F 1926/34).
 2. When the case was eventually heard, the Native Affairs Department changed its defence and argued that Kadalie's claim fell, not under Ordinance 28 of 1902, but under Proclamation 35 of 1901, the Coloured Persons Exemption Proclamation, and, therefore, that his application was irregular. This argument was upheld by Acting Justice I. Grindley-Ferris, who dismissed the application for a court order. An application by Kadalie's solicitors for exemption from costs was also rejected. (South African Law Reports (1927), Transvaal Provincial Division, 1927 TPD: Rex versus Harmsworth, p.862-869). On appeal, in 1928, Kadalie at last won his case with costs. (Findlay and Niemeyer to C. Kadalie 1st August, 1928, B/UCT; C. Kadalie: My Life and the I.C.U., p.107, which has the dates muddled).

In the meantime the National Secretary displayed extreme reluctance to test the Natal ban. In June he tried, somewhat optimistically, an appeal to the South African Labour Party, which went unanswered,⁽¹⁾ and it is unlikely that he would ever have moved if Champion, who had been advised that Law 48 of 1884 was a dead letter, had not prodded him from May onwards.⁽²⁾ Shortage of money was one difficulty. The response to the National Council's call to branches for funds was disappointing.⁽³⁾ Towards the end of July Kadalie was thinking about going to the Cape to try and raise money there,⁽⁴⁾ but evidently decided against it lest he could not get back again to Johannesburg, and at the end of the month La Guma, Khaile and he decided that the General Secretary should go to the Eastern Province to try and arouse the branches from their "extreme lethargy", while Kadalie himself should concentrate on the Reef, where his freedom of movement was not interfered with.⁽⁵⁾

1. The Workers' Herald 15th November, 1926.

2. A.W.G. Champion to C. Kadalie 12th May, 1926 (F 1926/11). "It seems to me that Mr. Kadalie does not feel like to come down (sic) notwithstanding the fact that our Legal Advisers advised him to come down". (A.W.G. Champion to La Guma 14th May, 1926, F 1926/12). Cf. also C. Kadalie to A.W.G. Champion 17th May, 1926 (F 1926/13).

3. The Workers' Herald 15th June, 1927.

4. C. Kadalie to A.W.G. Champion 22nd July, 1926 (F 1926/34).

5. C. Kadalie, J. La Guma and E. Khaile to I.C.U. Branches 30th July, 1926 (F 1926/37).

At last, on 19th August, the National Secretary made a move, either because morale was so low in the I.C.U. that something had to be done to raise it, or because Champion came from Durban to fetch him. In an extended military metaphor Kadalie's annual report for 1926 read at the 1927 Conference at Durban, explains the situation:

"The only medium between the Headquarters of the Organisation and Branches was fortunately (sic) our Official Organ - "The Workers' Herald". Therein both the Sub-Editor (1) and I sent out each month words of encouragement to our soldiers on the battle front which was on the retreat. With all our inspiring writings, the results were not promising: the soldiery desired to see someone from the War Office who could verbally arouse them. The Organisation was on the collapse (sic), the Government had a temporary victory. And what brave General could have permitted his army to be disintegrated in this way by his enemy? The moment for decision would soon arrive. The old saying comes into my judgment - 'It is a noble thing and heroic thing to die fighting'. ... I resolved to proceed to Natal to test the legality of the ban on my free movements after legal opinions had been obtained. I must pay great tribute in this connection to Comrade A.W.G. Champion ... I doubt if we would be assembling here to-day as a Trade Union had Comrade Champion not encouraged me to cross the border. Comrade Champion did not only encourage me to cross the border, but actually came to Johannesburg to escort me into Natal. I know of one official of the Organisation (2) who had hinted to me that Comrade Champion's object was to put me into a tight corner and leave me there to suffer the consequences alone. But this ill talk proved in vain." (3)

In Durban Kadalie addressed large meetings⁽⁴⁾ and applied for an inward pass, which the local official would not issue

1. H.D. Tyamzashe.

2. A.P. Maduna perhaps.

3. The Workers' Herald 15th June, 1927.

4. The Workers' Herald 14th October, 1926, which wrongly says he spent ten days in Durban.

without instructions from the Native Affairs Department. Returning to Johannesburg, he was given an enthusiastic welcome, when he triumphantly suggested to the crowd that the best way to deal with the pass laws was to defy them. On a second trip to Durban, on 24th September, he was arrested and charged with entering Natal without an inward pass.⁽¹⁾ On 15th October a fine of £3 (with the option of 14 days hard labour) was imposed upon him in the magistrate's court. His sentence, however, was set aside on appeal by Justice Tatham in the Supreme Court at Pietermaritzburg on the ground that, as a secretary of a trade union, he was entitled to a concession under the law that permitted people on legitimate business (in his case auditing the books of the Durban I.C.U. branch) to stay within the province for up to seven days without a pass and he had in fact been in Natal for fewer than seven days. "It has been suggested for the crown", said the judge, "that the real object of the appellant's visit to Durban was to engage in political activity. That may or may not be the case, and whatever I may think about this I am bound by the evidence led in the Court below, which does not establish that fact".⁽²⁾

1. Ibid.

2. A.W.G. Champion: The Truth about the I.C.U., p.17-19. Kadalie was defended by Roy Mathorne, K.C. (National Council Executive Bureau to National Council Members 21st October, 1926, F 1926/46), not Hawthorn (C. Kadalie: My Life and the I.C.U., p.93).

Naturally Kadalie treated this episode as a "bitter pill for both the Union Government and the Natal authorities"⁽¹⁾ and as a triumph for his Union. It was, however, but a limited victory. While it is true that Kadalie had broken the ban, he was still not free to stay as he wished in Natal, since to remain in that province for longer than a week still necessitated an inward pass. Besides, it would have been easy enough for the Government to make things more difficult for him by framing new regulations under Law 48 of 1884. If it did not do so, it was presumably because that would have been more than the Prime Minister's Labour colleagues could stomach.⁽²⁾ The question arises why it was that the Government simply did not deport Kadalie. The answer was that it did not have the power to without further legislation. Unless Kadalie committed an offence under Section 22 of the Immigration Act, he was immune, because once the Minister of the Interior had permitted a prohibited immigrant to remain, the decision was binding upon himself and his successors, and in Kadalie's case the discretion had already been exercised in his favour in 1921.⁽³⁾

By October, 1926, when the National Secretary's appeal in Natal had been upheld, the I.C.U. was coming increasingly under the influence of what the late Professor Roux derisively

1. Ibid, p.93.

2. Cf. A.W.G. Champion to C. Kadalie 30th October, 1926 (F 1926/38a).

3. Union of South Africa: Debates of the House of Assembly 1926, Col.1280-1281.

called "certain 'good people' who had never before displayed any interest in African trade unionism ... Among these were religious people, college professors, humanitarians and the like".⁽¹⁾ Hitherto the I.C.U. leaders had been hostile to and contemptuous of liberals and missionaries. Christianity as practised by whites was seen as a gigantic piece of hypocrisy, a trick perpetrated on the black man, who gained the white man's Bible, but lost his land in the exchange. It was not a question of attacking Christianity, to which probably most I.C.U. leaders subscribed, but a belief that the white man had departed from its true practice and used it as a device for exploitation. Indeed I.C.U. propagandists chose to regard Christ as the arch² typical radical and agitator.

"Christ, when he lived on earth, challenged the existing order, and as the greatest agitator known to mankind, He became the victim of the rulers of the Jews ...

"One wonders how the white man in South Africa can reconcile himself with the teaching of his Master ...

"The white man has shamelessly robbed the aboriginal of his land, plus the oppression of the weaker peoples, with utter disregard for the teaching of love and human fellowship enunciated by our Saviour ... It was time that white South Africa realise the tenets of true Christianity and practise what they preach".⁽²⁾

European priests and missionaries, with some exceptions, responded with indignation or indifference.⁽³⁾ "'Down with everything that's up, and up with everything that's down' seems

1. E. Roux: Time Longer than Rope, p.161.

2. The Workers' Herald 15th December, 1925.

3. Mrs. Lewis noted "the coldness of the clergy and other educated people of influence". (Memorandum to Lord Olivier and Dr. Norman Leys April, 1928, B/UCT).

to be your policy", wrote the American missionary Ray Phillips to the Editor of The Workers' Herald in June, 1925,

"and you don't allow the truth to stand in your way in pursuing this policy. You strike at everybody in sight, friend as well as enemy. It is a short-sighted policy, for it will lead you in the ditch. The Native people are beginning to think for themselves, and when they finish reading your virulent articles they will ask themselves, 'Is this true? Or are these wordy young writers only deceiving us, trying to get us excited enough to hand over to them our hard-earned wages, so that they can live fast and loose in the towns without working?'" (1)

The Rev. Phillips was secretary of the Bantu Men's Social Centre (founded in 1924 and given the blessing of moderate African leaders, including the Rev. J.L. Dube and R.V. Selope Thema⁽²⁾), which itself came under attack.

"... It is as true as one and one make two that the B.M.S.C. represents the blind and mislead (sic) Africans. It is equally true that all those who compose the membership of that Institution are regarded by the majority of our people as castaways ...

"The harm and evil which have been done by the B.M.S.C. to our people in and about the City of Johannesburg, since its inception is indeed far better unsaid than told. The farseeing and deep thinking class of Africans know that the foundation stones upon which this dangerous Institution is built is capitalism and parasitism, two sister twins; and that the purpose for which it was inaugurated are (sic) three, namely: Profit, Propaganda and Deceit ..." (3)

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1. Rev. R. Phillips to the Editor, The Workers' Herald 2nd June, 1925 (F Joint Council File/30). The letter was published in the issue of 15th June, 1925 with a bitter editorial comment. There was an attack on Phillips in the next issue with the caption "A Case of Satan Reproving Sin".
 2. Ilanga lase Natal 1st February, 1924. The site was given by the Johannesburg Town Council, the building constructed with white donations.
 3. The Workers' Herald 15th August, 1925.

Quotations in this vein could be multiplied, as could the following on the Johannesburg Joint Council of Europeans and Natives, another butt for I.C.U. scorn.

"Let the African workers be not deceived, nothing tangible could come out from the 'Joint Councils of Europeans and Natives'. An exploited race has not to look to the exploiter for emancipation from the shackles of slavery ... Then what is the real object of these Joint Councils? The English capitalists have realised that in spite of severe oppression meted out to the subject race, we are not decreasing at all in numbers, but increasing, and of late formidable organisations of the Africans are making headway without any capitalistic leadership. To counteract this onward march for emancipation are these Joint Councils of Europeans and Natives established ..."(1)

Most liberals would argue that the Joint Councils proved their value in the performance of solid, if unspectacular, service to the African community.⁽²⁾ For the I.C.U., however, those Africans who were associated with them and with the Bantu Men's Social Centre were the "good boys", the dupes of the Chamber of Mines, which was the archvillain of the capitalist plot.

1. The Workers' Herald 9th January, 1925.

2. The "Johannesburg Joint Council was able to publish a good many trenchant memoranda which were the means at least of keeping Government and public aware that later legislation had its critics. The drafting of these memoranda may have been the work of European members. At their best the substance was the Africans' contribution". (W. Macmillan: Africa Emergent; a Survey of Social, Political and Economic trends in British Africa, 2nd ed., (Harmondsworth, 1949, p.317). Professor Macmillan was himself a member, but few would quarrel with his modest assessment. The Nationalists not unexpectedly took a different view. One Nationalist M.L.A. described the Joint Council as "an incubator which will result in the natives being worked up". (Union of South Africa: Debates of the House of Assembly, 1926, Col.2072).

This deep suspicion felt by the I.C.U. for the Johannesburg Joint Council and the B.M.S.C. was never wholly allayed. It was lulled, but it broke out again in due course, perhaps even more sharply. In point of fact, however, although the men involved in the Joint Council movement were brought somewhat gingerly into contact with the I.C.U., the influence that now came to bear on the Union issued from a rather different quarter. The new influence was exerted by a female triumvirate with a wide circle of friends and acquaintances among liberals and socialists in South Africa and England. The first of these women was Mrs. Palmer, who had been of some assistance to Kadalie at the time of his first propaganda efforts in Durban in 1924 and who liked to think that she had some sway over Champion. In 1926 she was fifty years of age and had been in South Africa since the end of the war, after having been prominent in the Suffragette and Fabian movements in England. In Durban in the 1920's she was lecturing in Economics at the Natal Technical College.⁽¹⁾ It was she who was responsible for a meeting between the I.C.U. leaders and Winifred Holtby,⁽²⁾ a member of the British Independent Labour Party, a pacifist, a contributor to The New Leader, Time and Tide and The Manchester Guardian and a novelist of some distinction.⁽³⁾ She was much the youngest of the three women, being twenty-eight in 1926. From February to June, 1926, she made a tour of South Africa that was partly financed by a

1. M. Palmer: The History of the Indians in Natal (Natal Regional Survey No. 10, 1957), p.vii.

2. W. Holtby to E. Lewis 24th August (1926) (B/Wits.).

3. Her best known novel is South Riding.

series of lectures she delivered for the League of Nations Union. Her first impressions of the I.C.U. leaders and the situation in which they found themselves are of some interest.

Champion: "extraordinarily dignified, efficient and moderate"; "reasonable, courteous, patient beyond description".

Maduna: "highly cultured and intelligent".

Kadalie: "extremist, suspicious, sensitive, vain, sincere".

The South African predicament: "A huge mass of absolutely helpless people; a few half-educated black leaders, bewildered by modern industrial conditions, and perplexed by an inbred inferiority complex when dealing with white men; a largely indifferent or hostile white population, worried into the apprehension that may lead to extreme repressive action; a Labour Party out to preserve white labour in the immediate present, with little thought for the future development of the country; and " - an echo of Roux" - "a few intelligent white people - mostly professors and missionaries - attempting to bridge the gulf." (1)

Displaying a great interest in the work of the I.C.U., Miss Holtby promised to see, on her return to England, what help could be given it.

In Johannesburg Winifred Holtby met Mrs. Ethelreda Lewis, the third member of the triumvirate, to whom she had already been introduced in England in 1923.⁽²⁾ Mrs. Lewis, who had lived in South Africa since the beginning of the century⁽³⁾ and was a year older than Mrs. Palmer, was also a writer. Her chief claim to fame is her association with Trader Horn,

1. V. Brittain and G. Handley-Taylor eds.: Selected Letters of Winifred Holtby and Vera Brittain, 1920-1935 (London, 1960), p.97, 101, 116, 136, 137.

2. V. Brittain: Testament of Friendship, p.155.

3. The article on Mrs. Lewis in the Standard Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa, Vol.VI (Cape Town, 1972) puts her arrival in South Africa at 1904, but she says quite categorically in 1927 that she had been in the country twenty-eight years.

whose adventures she was committing to writing in 1926, but she also wrote a number of novels that achieved a modest popularity. The "Native problem" had long interested her and she had contributed on that subject to English periodicals. To term Mrs. Lewis a liberal would be far from the truth, unless the description can be properly applied to any white person in a racially mixed society who is willing to work with or on behalf of blacks. In fact she was a convinced supporter of the South African Party, to which she had come from the Unionist Party. Terrified, however, of Communism she was willing to overcome her distaste for socialism of the non-Communist variety and steer the I.C.U. in that direction on the principle that an inoculation of a mild form of socialism would be a prophylactic against its more virulent form, though it would be unfair to suggest that she was not also concerned to promote "native rights in their own native land". With considerable reluctance, on the day after the passage in May, 1926, of the Colour Bar Act, which she deplored, she approached Clements Kadalie to try and convince him "that he would find better, safer, more stable white friends for himself than the white communists - people who will never let him down again to the ultimate necessity of falling back on communist friends or fighting quite alone for the rights of black workers".⁽¹⁾

Mrs. Lewis coupled with her detestation of Communism a nice sense of what was proper for a woman in her position.

1. E. Lewis: Memorandum on the I.C.U. and white helpers 22nd January, 1927 (B/Wits.); E. Lewis to General Smuts 4th January, 1927 (B/Wits.).

The fact that her husband, who was a doctor, was employed by the Government made it difficult enough, she thought, for her to become too openly involved in the I.C.U. But her misgivings extended further.

"I felt deeply the hopelessness of a woman, and a woman of my age, trying to put her shoulder to such an enormous wheel. And far more than that I felt the bitter incongruity (I felt it as a sort of outrage to myself no less than to the natives) of a woman trying to help natives. In the full knowledge ... that no black man so recently in the kraal as the S.A. native can respect or look up to a woman my action was a humiliation not only to the natives I sought to help but to myself." (1)

She looked around for men to assist. She approached Sarah Millin, the writer, in the hope that her husband would help in the search for suitable assistants; she made overtures to two bright young men of her acquaintance, J.D. Krige and O. Schreiner; and she appealed to her friends on the Joint Council. All the help she got was in the form of occasional lectures delivered by Professor Edgar Brookes of the Transvaal University College and F.S. Livie-Noble, the Secretary of the Pretoria Joint Council, at the Workers' Hall.

Of the three women Mrs. Lewis was the most patronising or rather was actuated by the crudest kind of paternalism. On the day before she went to see Kadalie in May, 1926, she read an address to a Church synod in Johannesburg that reveals her attitude with great clarity. Speaking of "our dark

1. Memorandum on the I.C.U. "This was written in defence of myself after what Mrs. Millin's friends had said, but not used". Apparently Mrs. Lewis was criticised for engaging in work that was not suitable for women.

countrymen clamouring like children at the skirts of the white man as a boy at its father's coat ... the infant race whose playground the white man burst into three centuries ago", Mrs. Lewis went on to suggest that what South Africa stood in need of was a John Chinn, the hero of Kipling's The Tomb of his Ancestors, or rather a series of John Chinns, each

"... devoted to his work, making it his pride - a sort of holy inarticulate pride - to understand each the different race or caste or tribe under his special jurisdiction. Language and customs and superstitions and religions - all were familiar and, as it were, sacred knowledge to the good Civil Servant, sacred as a child's habits become a matter of sacred moment to a good parent ... We need S. Africans of both white races, who have been brought up to look at the Native with a familiar, an unsentimental eye. And we need to train that eye, which has known the Native all its life, to be imaginative, to be just, to be pitiful, to be brotherly, but never to be sentimental ... These workers to be location masters, to run hostels and hospitals, to teach agricultural methods." (1)

And, presumably, to guide the I.C.U.

In accepting the offer of help from the three women, Kadalie was not being seduced by white flattery - as acceptable as he found it - to follow a policy that was against his better judgment. Rather did he see opened before him an avenue to a prize for which he had long striven, the integration of the I.C.U. into the main stream of the labour movement. He was not adopting a new policy, but pursuing one that had been under discussion ever since the Bloemfontein Conference of 1920, an appeal to the international labour movement. The possibility of sending a man to Britain had

1. E. Lewis: The Church and Racial Problems (B/Wits).

been raised as early as the East London Conference of January, 1924. When the civilised labour policy of the Nationalist-Labour coalition came to be implemented in such a way that the I.C.U. leaders could no longer deceive themselves about the real intentions of the government which they had helped into power, the idea of appealing to Great Britain recurred with greater urgency. In July, 1925, Kadalie was saying that the British labour movement must be woken from its slumber and made to realise that "British imperialism is resorting to dastardly means in legislating against the aboriginals of the Continent", and he was expressing his confidence in the ability of the British Labour Party to influence events in South Africa. "Our last resort is to broadcast our appeal to the British labour movement and we are doing so because we believe in International Labour".⁽¹⁾ This was the background to the resolution moved by James Dippa on 6th April, 1926, at the Sixth Annual Conference. International pressure would, it was hoped, not merely force the Government to modify its policy, but also shame the white labour movement in South Africa into displaying a comradely spirit towards black workers. Bitter disappointment with Colonel Creswell and his narrow-mindedness did not destroy the hope of a colour-blind proletarian solidarity. Such hopes and plans were not the product of new liberal influence, which did no more than foster and encourage them.

1. The Workers' Herald 20th July, 1925.

It was through Mrs. Palmer and Miss Holtby that the I.C.U. made contact with the labour movement in Britain, a direct approach two months after the 1926 Conference to the British Trades Union Congress, after some delay caused by the General Strike,⁽¹⁾ having brought a terse reply referring the I.C.U. to the International Federation of Trade Unions, the headquarters of which were in Amsterdam.⁽²⁾ During the period when he was confined to the Johannesburg area Kadalie was in correspondence with Winifred Holtby (as was Mrs. Lewis) and, when he went to Durban in defiance of his ban, he renewed his acquaintance with Mrs. Palmer. Through the efforts of these two women a gift of books came from England in response to an appeal made by Miss Holtby in The New Leader - an appeal which itself gave the I.C.U. additional publicity in South Africa⁽³⁾ - reinforced by the conversations that Mrs. Palmer, on a visit to England in 1926, had with her socialist friends, Sidney Webb, Bernard Shaw, H.N. Brailsford (editor of The New Leader) and Arthur Creech Jones, the National Secretary of the Administrative, Clerical and Supervisory Group of the Transport and General Workers' Union. Winifred Holtby was also in touch with Jones and Brailsford. To her Brailsford suggested the setting up of an informal committee - "a sort of 'Friends of Africa' group" - to consult

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1. In May Kadalie proposed that his Union send money to the T.U.C. as a gesture of friendship (National Secretary to Members of the National Council 7th May, 1926, F 1926/10), but it is unlikely in straitened financial circumstances of the I.C.U. at that time that any was actually sent.
 2. The National Council Executive Bureau to the Members of the National Council 21st October, 1926 (F 1926/46); C. Kadalie to W. Holtby 10th September, 1926 (WH).
 3. C. Kadalie to W. Holtby 10th September, 1926 (WH).

on measures to assist the I.C.U., and he advised ~~an~~ I.C.U. application for affiliation to the British Labour Party.⁽¹⁾ When, however, Kadalie wrote to Miss Holtby in September, inquiring about the chances of affiliation to either the Labour Party or the Independent Labour Party, it seems to have been entirely his own idea. While awaiting an answer he wrote also, the address having been given to him by Mrs. Palmer, to Creech Jones. Although in this, his first, letter Kadalie, not yet appreciating Jones's unemotional, almost bureaucratic, cast of mind, spoke of men and women having been "shot in cold blood under General Smuts's Government, simply because they asked an increase of wages to enable themselves to have a civilised life",⁽²⁾ scarcely more than a partial truth, he soon adapted his own style to his correspondent's,⁽³⁾ not, however, that Creech Jones was ever less than courteous and sympathetic.⁽⁴⁾

Creech Jones saw no chance of I.C.U. affiliation to the British Labour Party or the I.L.P., but considered that an application to the International Federation of Trade Unions (to which the old South African Industrial Federation had been affiliated) would be worth while, a view also expressed by Sidney Webb to Mrs. Palmer.⁽⁵⁾ Although the International

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1. W. Holtby to E. Lewis 24th August (1926) (B/Wits.)
 2. C. Kadalie to A. Creech Jones 6th October, 1926 (WH).
 3. As Jones normally addressed him as "Mr. Kadalie", the latter dropped his "Comrade" in favour of the same conventional salutation.
 4. "It is hardly necessary for me to express my very great sympathy with the work you are trying to do and also my admiration for the courageous way in which you tackle your very difficult problem." (A. Creech Jones to C. Kadalie 16th October, 1926, WH).
 5. C. Kadalie to W. Holtby 10th September, 1926 (WH).

Federation normally accepted only applications for affiliation from national centres, he thought that in the special circumstances of South Africa an application from the I.C.U. would be entertained.⁽¹⁾ An application was duly sent off in November.⁽²⁾ Jones also thought that the setting up of an informal committee in London to help the I.C.U. would be a good idea.

For some months the I.C.U. remained on good terms with liberals and Communists, with Ethelreda Lewis's literary articles in The Workers' Herald (whimsically signed "Reader") appearing next to radical attacks upon the white establishment and its ways,⁽³⁾ but mutual distrust between I.C.U. and C.P. was growing. Champion, who as early as May, 1926, was denying in Durban any connection between his organisation and the Communists,⁽⁴⁾ was particularly uneasy about the relationship and, being into the bargain abnormally sensitive, was stung to fury, and no doubt to hatred of the Communist Party, in August, 1926, by some mild criticisms that appeared in the Communist paper, The South African Worker. L.H. Greene, a member of the C.P. in Pietermaritzburg and one of the rare white members of the I.C.U., ventured to suggest that the two shilling monthly subscription of the Union was too high and that Champion's lavish expenditure upon legal proceedings was unwise. In a letter to the paper the Natal leader denied that Greene had any right

1. W. Holtby to C. Kadalie 8th October, 1926 (B/Wits.).

2. C. Kadalie to A. Creech Jones 1st December, 1926 (WH).

3. Cf., e.g. The Workers' Herald 14th October, 1926.

4. A.W.G. Champion to C. Kadalie 12th May, 1926, F 1926/11.

"to pick up pens and pose as an official or reporter just because it happens to be a white man amongst the illiterate black fools ... We want 2/- for every member that joins in accordance with the terms of our constitution. We shall not be jim-crowed by anybody, whether he has a white face or not." (1)

When Kadalie defied the government ban that same month of August, Communists joined in the welcome he received on his return to Johannesburg and Kadalie graciously exempted the Soviet Government from his general condemnation of governments. (2) Privately, however, Bunting was faintly contemptuous of Kadalie and deeply suspicious of Champion, though convinced of the impossibility of the I.C.U.'s escaping Communist influence.

"Behind the scenes the I.C.U. secretary (Kadalie), who, when all is said, is vain and anxious for limelight, though not yet a bad lot, is coming under the influence of reactionaries including Champion, who is now hostile, and quite a coolness now prevails between us. But it would be quite a topsy-turvy event if the mass he represents should be jockeyed into going to Amsterdam. (3) I think the fight should not be unduly intensified into a split, but our views must be made to prevail on every occasion of division, and the rank and file accustomed to act as a team and take the lead." (4)

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1. Quoted E. Roux: S.P. Bunting, p.73; S.W. Johns: Trade union, political pressure group, or mass movement?, p.725.
 2. E. Roux: S.P. Bunting, p.73-74; E. Roux: Time Longer than Rope, p.159-160.
 3. i.e. joining the I.F.T.U.
 4. S.P. Bunting to E. Roux 15th December, 1926, quoted E. Roux: S.P. Bunting, p.75.

The occasion for, though not the cause of, the breach between the I.C.U. and the C.P. was the acceptance by the General Secretary, James La Guma, of the Party's nomination to represent it at the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities, due to take place at Brussels early in the following year, 1927, without consulting the Union.⁽¹⁾ This alleged discourtesy prompted those leaders who were anxious for a show-down with the Communists to place on the agenda of the next National Council meeting a request for the formulation of a definite policy governing "the Union's relation to other political organisations, such as the Communist Party".⁽²⁾ The National Council met at Port Elizabeth on 16th and 17th December. The meeting, attended by only thirteen of the nineteen Council members,⁽³⁾ was a stormy one, with Kadalie throwing a tantrum as a result of an altercation with La Guma. At one point the meeting broke up and when it resumed after a short interval, a resolution was moved by Alex. P. Maduna, himself a renegade from the C.P.,⁽⁴⁾ seconded by A.W.G. Champion,⁽⁵⁾ requiring Union officials who were members of the Communist Party either to relinquish their membership or to resign office in the I.C.U. An amendment moved by Thomas

1. The Workers' Herald 12th January, 1927.

2. Ibid.

3. E. Roux: Time Longer than Rope, p.163; S.W. Johns: Loc.cit., p.725. It is difficult to tell who were the six absentees. They included probably Gumbs, Johnson, certainly De Norman and 'Mote. If Gumbs was absent the meeting was unconstitutional, because the President was necessary to make a quorum. The meeting was chaired by Tyamzashe. (The Workers' Herald 15th June, 1927).

4. The Workers' Herald 17th May, 1927.

5. According to Mr. Champion's recollections, it was he who initiated the move against the Communists, while Kadalie was reluctant. (Interview with Mr. Champion 28th June, 1971).

Mbeki that "no official be expelled by reason of his being a communist" was rejected and Maduna's motion carried by six votes (including Maduna, Champion, Kadalie and Tyamzashe)⁽¹⁾ to five (La Guma, Khaile, Mbeki, Gomas and another), with presumably two abstentions. Refusing to resign from the Party, four of the five Communists of the National Council were summarily expelled from the Union and the meeting came to an abrupt close. De Norman, who was not present, submitted with an ill-grace and Mbeki recanted.⁽²⁾

The Communist version of events⁽³⁾ claimed that the real reason for the expulsion was that the Communists were an increasing embarrassment to "reactionary, bureaucratic and corrupt elements" in the I.C.U., as they pressed for a more active and forthright policy, stricter control of finance and a curb upon the National

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1. 'Mote gave his support subsequently. (C. Kadalie to A.W.G. Champion 28th December, 1926, F 1926/67).
 2. E. Roux: Op.cit., p.163-164: S.W. Johns: Loc.cit., p.725-726; H.D. Tyamzashe to A.W.G. Champion 21st December, 1928 (misdated 1927); The Workers' Herald 21st January, 1927.
 3. H.J. and R.E. Simons: Op.cit., p.354-360 gives a lengthy Communist apologia that is open to question. As the authors themselves say (p.359), the I.C.U. first sought contact with the international labour movement in April, 1926. Since this was before friendly relations were established with Mrs. Lewis and Miss Holtby, it cannot be said that the approach to the I.F.T.U. was the result of liberal pressure, as is implied (p.360). Still less can it be said that the expulsion of the Communists was demanded as condition for "support and recognition" (p.356). To make Kadalie "the arch pilferer" (quoted with apparent approval from the C.P.'s Umsebenzi of 6th June, 1930) (p.356) in December, 1926, at the end of a year when he was in chronic need of money seems as unfair as to imply that Mrs. Lewis and the others were "racists" (p.356).

Secretary's power.⁽¹⁾ This allegation is not without substance and the weightiest piece of evidence showing that Communist officials were more concerned than their colleagues about financial irregularities and constitutional improprieties is La Guma's report of March, 1926, upon his tour of inspection of the I.C.U. branches.⁽²⁾ Estimating conservatively a loss during the preceding year of between five hundred and six hundred pounds owing to "Inefficiency, Dishonesty, and Unconstitutionality on the part of Branch and other Officials" but admitting that a high level of administrative competence could scarcely be expected from untrained and inexperienced branch officers, the General Secretary made some severe criticisms that extended to unnamed Provincial Secretaries and were particularly unsparing of the National Secretary himself, who was taken to task for his failure to observe constitutional proprieties in his leasing of the Workers' Hall in Johannesburg.

"Practically in every Branch I visited the same disregard of Regulations prevailed, in many cases with the knowledge of the officials specially appointed to prevent the same. I made it my duty to emphasize the need for stricter attention to the requirements of the Constitution under penalty of drastic action being taken against an offender.

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1. The Workers' Herald 21st January, 1927; E. Roux: Op.cit., p.163-164; S.W. Johns: Loc.cit., p.723; E. and W. Roux: Rebel Pity, p.57-58. Support for this point of view comes from an unexpected quarter, viz. W.G. Ballinger, the later Adviser, who himself was a target of Communist hostility. "The move which removed the so-called communists from the I.C.U. was disastrous. The officials concerned were the fighters and were really dismissed because they insisted on the General Secretary of the I.C.U. presenting an account of his financial intrusions (sic)." (W.G. Ballinger to A. Fenner Brockway 15th May, 1929, B/Wits.). The reference of course is to Kadalie (National Secretary) not to La Guma (General Secretary).
 2. Report of Inspection of Branches (F 1926/6).

"From investigation and experience during my term of office, I am prepared to state without a shadow of doubt that a great deal of corruption exists within the official ranks, and that strong and severe methods must be employed to eliminate this danger in time if we wish to succeed in our objectives. This vice as we know from past experience has been responsible for the failure of practically all organisations of African peoples prior to this, and is the product of slack discipline and unconstitutionalism. For the good of the movement it is essential that cases of indiscipline and unconstitutional action be harshly dealt with irrespective of office or person, and sentimentality of any description be ruthlessly set aside in the conducting of affairs of the Organisation. Otherwise we become party to the exploitation of the masses.

"... During the year past the Board of Arbitration has had occasion to call the National Secretary's attention to the fact that the Organisation is controlled by the National Council, on whose behalf the said Board functions... From appearance recently it seemed that a dictatorship is in embryo. This, as can easily be foreseen, will constitute the greatest danger of all, and as contrary to the democratic principles upon which the Organisation is founded, should be prevented."

One cannot doubt the truth of these strictures. Although at Conferences and at meetings of the National Council Kadalie was subject to a restraint which sometimes made him behave in a petulant and puerile way, between meetings of these bodies he had a more or less free hand, subject only to the need to gauge accurately what the rank and file of the organisation would accept or tolerate. It is also true that about La Guma, Gomas and Khaile, the officials who preferred to leave the I.C.U., no word of scandal is heard, and the same cannot be said about Maduna, who moved their expulsion, Champion, who seconded it, and Kadalie, whose consent made it possible. Some significance might be seen in the fact that La Guma was succeeded as General Secretary by Sam Dunn, who was sent to prison in 1928 for theft of I.C.U. funds, Khaile as Financial Secretary by William Smith,

who absconded with £25 in 1928,⁽¹⁾ and Gomas as Provincial Secretary by James Dippa of the Eastern Province, reinstated after having been suspended for neglecting his duties,⁽²⁾ to be replaced in turn by the conformist De Norman.

Another piece of evidence that supports the Communist case is that, during the National Secretary's ban, the General and Financial Secretaries were urging a policy of boldness. They wanted to call a general strike by way of protest and to restore I.C.U. morale.⁽³⁾ Kadalie took the view that the movement was not ready for such drastic action and he noticed that the militant La Guma himself was not keen, as second-in-command, to take charge of "the army which was about to be disintegrated by the enemy", but "confined himself to Headquarters".⁽⁴⁾

For all its plausibility, however, it is difficult to accept the Communist explanation uncritically. Apart from La Guma's report, which was issued nine months before the expulsion of the Communists and would presumably have made the same strictures if La Guma had not been a member of the Communist Party, and apart from isolated criticism of I.C.U. extravagance emanating from L.H. Greene in August, 1926, all the evidence that the Communist Party was the voice of conscience, urging greater militancy, financial purity and democracy is

1. W.G. Ballinger to W. Holtby 8th August, 1928 (B/UCT).

2. The Workers' Herald 15th June, 1927.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

ex post facto.⁽¹⁾ Kadalie and Champion had a good record of vigorous, if spasmodic, action against financial corruption, and no one was better placed than the Communist officials themselves to stamp out dishonesty at branch level, seeing that La Guma as General Secretary was responsible for general administration and Khaile was Financial Secretary. Besides, the available evidence indicates that until 1927 the I.C.U. did not dispose of significantly large sums of money. Throughout 1926 the organisation was chronically short of funds and Kadalie was in no position to spend freely.⁽²⁾

Support for the allegation that Kadalie got rid of the Communists in order to conceal some financial irregularity came from a disgruntled I.C.U. member in Durban, George Lenono, whose feud with Champion was to have significant repercussions later.

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1. S.W. Johns: Loc.cit., p.725 refers to The South African Worker of 24th December, 1926 and 12th January, 1927, but these issues of the organ of the C.P.S.A. came out after the breach between the Party and the I.C.U. There is nothing to support Dr. Johns's contention that the criticism levelled by the Communists "spotlighted genuine grievances and organisational weaknesses", nor that they "provided a platform around which discontented elements within the I.C.U. might have rallied to challenge the leadership, in particular Kadalie and Champion". Without these two the I.C.U. would have been nothing. There were undoubtedly "grievances and organisational weaknesses", but the Communists did not have a monopoly of virtue or percipience.
 2. "Kindly assist us in banking funds that you can spare. You know yourself of debts incurred by this office during the period of our friends" (i.e. the Communist officials). (C. Kadalie to A.W.G. Champion 28th December, 1926, F 1926/67). S.W. Johns: Loc.cit., p.726 suggests that "Kadalie and Champion were brought closer together" because of the threat posed by the Communists. Their alliance probably owed much more to the fact that Champion was getting a lot of money in by the end of 1926 and Kadalie was in need of it. H.J. and R.E. Simons: Op.cit., p.355, scouts the idea of any Communist intention to "take-over" the I.C.U., which indeed was unlikely.

Lenono's accusation was that La Guma was dismissed because he had been stopping Kadalie or Champion from misappropriating I.C.U. funds. Kadalie, after very reasonably pointing out, in a letter to him, that La Guma was dismissed only because he refused to leave the C.P. and that the decision had been one of the whole National Council, not merely of the National Secretary and the Natal Provincial Secretary, went on

"You must also realise, my dear friend, that the members of the Council are in a better position to realise the danger confronting the I.C.U. than perhaps you and many others would. Surely, if you in Durban cannot realise how the enemies used the Communist bokey (sic) in the I.C.U. then I am afraid none else will. It was but a few weeks ago when Messrs. Ncwana and Nyombolo (1) launched a gigantic attack upon the movement in Durban, and they used the Bolshevik bokey (sic) to frighten the rank and file and then solicit Government's interference in our work." (2)

Kadalie and Tyamzashe left Port Elizabeth immediately after the National Council meeting for Johannesburg, where they arrived on 21st^{December}.⁽³⁾ Consequently they missed the rival gatherings held by the I.C.U. and the expelled Communists at Korsten on the following Sunday. The latter, who demanded reinstatement and a campaign of passive resistance against the pass laws, seem to have drawn the greater sympathy, perhaps because Kadalie was not there.⁽⁴⁾ The Communist Party next issued an indignant

1. Of the former I.C.W.U.

2. C. Kadalie to G. Lenono undated (December, 1926). (G. Lenono: The I.C.U. Funds - Mr. Allison Champion, Provincial Secretary I.C.U. (Natal) and the I.C.U. Funds (Durban, 1927) (pamphlet).

3. H.D. Tyamzashe to A.W.G. Champion 21st December, 1926 (misdated 1927) (F 1927/136).

4. "What happened at Port Elizabeth was due to the fact that I was not present. I have commanding influence over the Coloured people of Port Elizabeth and I can without hesitation defy any one to oppose me in that city". (C. Kadalie to A.W.G. Champion 29th December, 1926, F 1926/68).

manifesto "to the Native workers and oppressed peoples of Africa - to the members of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of Africa", denying any intention of subverting the I.C.U.

"The C.P. is a political party, whereas the I.C.U. is a trade union. Nearly every member of the C.P. is a trade unionist and some hold office in the trade union movement. No other trade union has ever suggested that they should be expelled. You are told you cannot serve two masters. Your expelled officials have never served two masters, but only one - the downtrodden workers of Africa." (1)

Some attempt was made to rouse the branches against the leadership,⁽²⁾ but few responded. A meeting however, in Johannesburg, where the Party had a militant, if not numerous, following, could scarcely be controlled by the I.C.U. leaders, who were compelled to accept a motion from the floor to submit the National Council's decision to the next Conference for ratification. Kadalie mounted an attack upon Communism, especially upon its white leaders, and was subsequently accused by Bunting, who had been in the audience and had refused to leave when asked, of a crude appeal to racial prejudice in order to make his policy acceptable.⁽³⁾ It might indeed be thought that Kadalie was being, to say the least, inconsistent in rejecting the help of

1. E. Roux: Time Longer Than Rope, p.165.

2. The Workers' Herald 12th January, 1927.

3. E. Roux: Time Longer Than Rope, p.166; S.W. Johns: Loc.cit., p.726. Kadalie's own version of the Johannesburg meeting was somewhat different. "Last Sunday we had a big meeting at the Workers Hall and one saw Mr. Bunting and Mr. Sasch (sic) present. I gave them what they deserve as I was replying to their foolish manifesto appearing in their paper. Both La Guma and Khaile were present and they also got what they deserve. The country is behind the National Council old boy ... We shall bit (sic) them severely. The two men La Guma and Khaile now they (sic) do realise their folly. They have spoken to me at this office in terms of disappointed men. It appears that La Guma won't go to Europe, they deceived him the Communist". (C. Kadalie to A.W.G. Champion 28th December, 1926 F 1926/67). La Guma did in fact attend as the representative of the Communist Party and subsequently, accompanied by J.T. Gumede of the African National Congress, visited the U.S.S.R. (E. Roux: S.P. Bunting, p.75).

the Communist Party on the ground that it was white-dominated, while at the same time relying upon the support of white liberals who were urging him to break with it.⁽¹⁾ The two sets of relations, however, were not on all fours. On the one hand there was an organisation permeating the I.C.U. and seeking to influence it from within and induce it to travel the path of defiance, a policy which Kadalie knew quite well was impracticable; and, on the other hand, there was the offer of external assistance which would, it was hoped, lead to very definite advantages. Kadalie, then and later, insisted that he ejected the Communists because they were overbearing and, over a period of eighteen months had been "prying deeper and deeper into the internal affairs" of the I.C.U.,⁽²⁾ as a counter-Manifesto of January, 1927, put it.⁽³⁾ Though he did not reveal this at the time, he subsequently made no attempt to conceal the pressure that had emanated from the

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1. E. Roux: Time Longer Than Rope, p.166, 279; E. Roux: S.P. Bunting, p.75. Roux suggests that the I.C.U. rank and file was unaware of Kadalie's association with white liberals, but this seems most unlikely.
 2. Mr. Gomas attributed his expulsion to Kadalie's determination that the I.C.U. should enjoy the undivided loyalty of its officials. (Interview with Mr. Gomas 18th May, 1970). Cf. also E.S. Munger: Afrikaner and African Nationalism; South African Parallels and Parameters (Oxford, 1967), p.85: "Kadalie was only the first of many African nationalist leaders to be 'white-anted' from within".
 3. The Workers' Herald 12th January, 1927. As usual with I.C.U. polemics, some of the counter-charges of its own manifesto were patently absurd. "The National Council is accused of betraying the workers and of handing them over to the 'boss' class. This is what the Communist Party are feverishly endeavouring to do. They advocate for (sic) a general cessation of work ... full knowing that they ... will again leave the workers in the lurch as they did during the 1919 dock strike at Cape Town ..." There is also a story so trivial and obscure that it does not bear repeating aimed at demonstrating the colour prejudice of the Communist leaders themselves.

white liberals. Speaking in August, 1929, he said,

"It was through pressure from Mrs. Palmer and Mrs. Ethelreda Lewis that a majority of fifty per cent. (sic) of the National Council at Port Elizabeth decided to purge its ranks of communism. This was done because ~~the~~ Communists attempted to take the whole administration of the I.C.U. into its (sic) hands." (1)

That black organisations resented and resisted white patronage is beyond dispute,⁽²⁾ and at the end of 1926 the I.C.U. leaders felt their freedom of action more threatened by the didacticism of the left than by the earnest advice of the centre, just as later the liberal yoke in turn became too heavy to bear.

The Communists claimed that the expulsion of the I.C.U. officials aroused widespread indignation and that "the whole of the I.C.U. machinery" was "thrown into a state of chaos".⁽³⁾ On the whole, however, it seems that the C.P. was damaged more than the I.C.U. The latter without doubt lost some able officials and it is clear that there was regret at the departure of Gomas,⁽⁴⁾

1. New Africa 14th September, 1929. On this occasion Kadalie vehemently denied that the expulsion had anything to do with financial administration.
2. Cf. I.C.U. Manifesto of 1923: The "I.C.U. and its leaders have been accused of receiving monetary assistance from the Bolshevik in Moscow and that this, purely an African Native Organisation, which has already scored so many victories for the black workers under the guidance and leadership of the Africans themselves, is now led by the Communist party." (Imvo Zabantsundu 9th October, 1923). What made the Bantu Men's Social Centre so suspect to radical Africans was that its secretary, chairman and the majority of its committee were white. (The Workers' Herald 15th August, 1925).
3. E. Roux: Time Longer Than Rope, p.165.
4. There was apparently no regret at the departure of La Guma, who was very much the office-bound bureaucrat. "Not one of the expelled officials, except young Gomas (whose youthful career has been ruined by these Communistic sharks) know the workers. Time and again they had literally (sic) to be kicked out of office in order to compel them to do some outside work" (The Workers' Herald 12th January, 1927), a view of La Guma, at least, supported by Mr. Gomas's recollections (interview 18th May, 1970).

but the Union's triumphant progress that had just begun proceeded unimpeded, its leaders even claiming that the breach had brought advantage.⁽¹⁾ It was the Communist Party that was brought up short, as Edward Roux, at that time a party militant, subsequently admitted.

"Communist work within the I.C.U. had brought few converts to the party and after the break and the expulsions, white revolutionaries were left fairly high and dry." (2)

University of Cape Town

1. The "opposition of the Communist Party helped us a great deal to consolidate our ranks." (The Workers' Herald 10th December, 1927).

2. E. Roux: Op.cit., p.203.

CHAPTER V

The Great Expansion, 1926-1927

When Noah sailed the ocean blue,
He had worries the same as you.
For weeks and weeks he drove the ark,
Before he found a place to park.

When oft man's power and strength and all
Seems but to fail and faint away,
The mighty hand salvation brings.

When hills and vales and waters sank,
God spake to Noah to build an ark.

Out of a burning bush God said
To Mose, "Go lead thy men away."

As he was bid he did not doubt
And saved the Israelites from doom.

As it was in the aged past,
So it is in the present day.

For years untold the son's (sic) of man,
The Africans of Native birth

Have been oppressed and called, "Jim Fish";
Kicked like dogs and called the brutes;

Sent to jail without fair trial;
With badges of oppression heaped;

Dismissed from farms before time's due;
Taken for beasts and shot to die;

Bribed and tipped to wreck their own;
Enslaved under disguise and taxed

To swell the coffers we know not
And feed the orphans of strange men.

To Champion son of George God spake:

"Go lead thy men". He left the mines
To lead the world-wide I.C.U.

Ere since he has worked unflinchingly
And is the terror of the day.

etc.

(I.C.U. poem, c.1928)

It has already been noted that up to 1925 twenty-seven I.C.U. branches had been founded and that twenty- of them, that is almost three-quarters of the total, were in the Cape Province. The number of branches sufficiently active to send delegates to the Fifth Annual Conference of April, 1925, had been only fifteen, two-thirds of them in the Cape. A year later the evidence points to the existence of twenty-nine branches approximately two-thirds of them still in the Cape.⁽¹⁾ Twelve of them were situated in small towns grouped around Port Elizabeth and East London. In the Western Province support for the I.C.U. remained confined to the immediate area of Cape Town and the only other centre in the Cape was Kimberley. In Natal the movement had spread beyond Durban to Pietermaritzburg, but no further, and in the Orange Free State there was still only the branch at Bloemfontein. The Transvaal, on the other hand, now had eight branches.

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1. Cape Province: Adelaide, Alexandria, Bedford, Cape Town, Cathcart, Douglas, East London, Humansdorp, Kimberley, King William's Town, Middledrift, New Brighton, Port Elizabeth, Retreat, Somerset East, Stutterheim, Uitenhage and Windsorton; Natal: Durban and Pietermaritzburg; Orange Free State: Bloemfontein; Transvaal: Benoni, Germiston, Johannesburg, Middelburg, Potchefstroom, Pretoria, Randfontein and Witbank. (General Secretary's Report of Inspection of Branches 6th March, 1926, F 1926/6; The Workers' Herald 25th January and 27th March, 1926). There were delegates attending the 1926 Conference also from Donenkop and Hammanskraal in the Transvaal and Viljoen's Drift in the Orange Free State, but these places do not figure in any other list of branches, so that it can be assumed that the delegates represented only themselves or, if branches were established there, they soon failed. Probably the delegate of Douglas at the 1926 Conference, a chief, also represented only himself, though it reappears on a later list of branches in 1929, when its contribution to central funds during the six months November, 1928, to April, 1929, was only fourteen shillings. (Statement of Income and Expenditure 21st June, 1929, B/Wits). Potchefstroom appears to have been a very weak branch and may even have died soon after. (Rand Daily Mail 8th May, 1928). De Aar, Langebaan, Loerie, Luderitzbucht, Mossel Bay, Roodepoort, Simonstown, Touws River, Upington and Willowmore were lapsed or dead.

That two-thirds of the branches in 1926 were still situated in the Cape of Good Hope obscures the fact that the I.C.U. there was generally in decline, a state of affairs which is made clear by the General Secretary's report of his tour of Inspection at the beginning of the year. East London provided an exception to the general malaise, being described as "easily the foremost Branch of the Organisation as far as active membership, systematic administration, and efficiency is (sic) concerned." The report on Cape Town is ambiguous but leaves the impression that all was not well there: it "has encouragingly increased its membership, though at the cost of consistent effort owing to the strong and numerous counter-attractions and propaganda of other organised bodies ... In general the Cape Town Branch is worthily upholding its dignity as the Mother Branch of the organisation." Elsewhere in the province there was little of comfort for the I.C.U. Kimberley "is practically defunct, and will require a concentration of effort to raise it to the status that will enable it to maintain a whole time Secretary", while the branch at Port Elizabeth was "in a deplorable state". Of the small branches Adelaide, which in 1925 had displayed a most remarkable zeal, was in the throes of a minor financial scandal that was one of the factors in the suspension of the Provincial Secretary, James Dippa; Somerset East was "on the decline"; Bedford was "defunct"; King William's Town was "in the unenviable position of having a monthly income just about sufficient to discharge its monthly liabilities"; New Brighton, Cathcart and Stutterheim were only sub-branches (by which La Guma presumably meant that they had no paid secretary), Retreat virtually so; and Windsorton had only a hundred members. Some of the Cape branches were not even considered worthy of mention - Alexandria, Humansdorp, Middledrift, Uitenhage and Douglas.

It appears from La Guma's report that the most promising branches early in 1926 were Johannesburg - "one of the most important Branches of the Organisation" - and Durban - "a stronghold of the Organisation in Natal ... progressing famously". The situation at Bloemfontein was less satisfactory. "Matters are taking a decided upward trend and with careful supervision by the responsible officials Bloemfontein can be expected to regain its former prestige within the year." Clearly this was an optimistic forecast of the future progress of a branch that had had its trials - the scandal associated with the April riots and the embezzlement charges against Elias and Mancoe.

In the months following the General Secretary's report, the period during which Kadalie was under ban and the I.C.U. was in the doldrums, Bloemfontein did not, it would appear, justify La Guma's optimism, and even the Rand was disappointing. Kadalie attributed the drop in support to the fact that he was cooped up in Johannesburg, but this would not account for the lukewarmness of Johannesburg itself, which was noticeable even before the ban.⁽¹⁾ It is apparent that the Union was living - ban or no ban - a hand-to-mouth existence, dependent upon current income and with no reserves.

"The position always is that as soon after the month end (sic), it takes a while before funds come to hand from the Branches, since most of them only collect their subscriptions at the end of the month, in the meantime Head Office has exhausted her (sic) account

1. A "drop in the monthly returns of the Branch has also been evidenced", wrote La Guma in his report of March.

"in discharging Branch and other Requisitions."⁽¹⁾

The only consolation during the period of stagnation was the increasing prosperity of the branch at Durban, from which Champion reported in May, 1926, that the membership was "going very high".⁽²⁾

Kadalie's letters during the months of his ban were one long complaint about money. "We have no funds available at present." (May, 1926).⁽³⁾ "Our financial position becomes acute as ever. I see great danger that the ship of state is running towards the rock and it behoves (sic) us as captains of this mighty ship to take steps to prevent the pending disaster." (22nd July, 1926).⁽⁴⁾ "The fact is that there has been such a decrease in payments of contributions throughout the Organisation that the income at Head Office from Branches has been insignificant, and totally inadequate to meet the large amount of Branch Requisitions in arrear at Head Office, apart from our other outstanding liabilities." (30th July, 1926).⁽⁵⁾ Funds were so short that "dependable branches" were authorised to meet liabilities from what they could collect themselves, by-passing Head Office.⁽⁶⁾

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1. J. La Guma to C. Kadalie 5th February, 1926 (F/Copies of Letters (1926)/44).
 2. A.W.G. Champion to J. La Guma 14th May, 1926 (F 1926/12).
 3. C. Kadalie to A.W.G. Champion 17th May, 1926 (F 1926/13).
 4. C. Kadalie to A.W.G. Champion 22nd July, 1926 (F 1926/34).
 5. National Council Executive Bureau to I.C.U. Branches 30th July, 1926 (F 1926/37).
 6. Ibid; National Council Executive Bureau Report, July, 1926 (F 1926/38).

This appealed so little to James Dippa that he sued the Union for "arrears of salaries and other expenses amounting to £90.2.3." It was for this piece of disloyalty, as well as for the Adelaide scandal, that he was suspended. There was also the charge that he was so busy with a land settlement company of which he was secretary that he was neglecting his I.C.U. duties.⁽¹⁾ He was replaced by Maduna, who was moved from the Orange Free State, and that province was taken over by Keable Mote.

One reason for financial stringency was the stubborn refusal of the Cape Town members of the National Council to consent to the transfer of the Union's fixed deposit of four hundred pounds from Cape Town to Johannesburg, where it was needed as a security against an overdraft. It was impossible to get a quorum for a National Council meeting in Johannesburg because President Gumbs and the other Cape Town members refused to budge. Eventually, with the prior agreement of the non-Cape Town members, La Guma was sent from Johannesburg and Champion from Durban to make a quorum in Cape Town and, apparently, after some persuasion these two got Gumbs to sign the necessary documents. By the end of July the Union had an overdraft of £268.7.6.⁽²⁾ This gave only temporary relief.

The National Secretary relied increasingly upon Durban. "I desire you", he wrote in July, 1926, to Champion, "that you

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1. National Council Executive Bureau to Members of the National Council 28th October, 1926 (F 1926/48).
 2. National Council Executive Bureau Report, July, 1926 (F 1926/38).

make special efforts to raise a considerable sum of money and must be banked (sic) before the end of the month ... But what is desired is that you as a comrade whom one can rely upon, is whether you can raise a substantial sum, either by loan or otherwise which must be credited against Head Office of the Organisation."⁽¹⁾

In September he wrote: "While thanking you for the banking made to-day according to your telegram, I shall be glad if you will make special effort to raise another £50"⁽²⁾

When Kadalie challenged the Government's ban in Natal, the legal charges were borne very largely by the Durban branch. His defence appeal seems to have brought in only small sums from the branches, apart from Johannesburg, which contributed rather more than thirty pounds, though even this was not enormous for such a big centre, especially as it may well have included the contributions from the entire Rand. Bloemfontein gave only £9 and Cape Town less than £4. East London sent in £10.⁽³⁾ Whereas the total cash transfers to Head Office in July, 1926, amounted to only £45,⁽⁴⁾ in August Durban alone transferred £133,⁽⁵⁾ in September £80,⁽⁶⁾ and in October £138.⁽⁷⁾

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1. C. Kadalie to A.W.G. Champion 22nd July, 1926 (F 1926/34).
 2. C. Kadalie to A.W.G. Champion 2nd September, 1926 (F 1926/43). The money was to enable Kadalie to sue the Government for not issuing letters of exemption or a registration certificate.
 3. The only other branches known to have contributed were Randfontein, Kimberley, Cathcart and King William's Town. (National Council Executive Bureau to Members of the National Council 21st October, 1926, F 1926/46). The sums mentioned therein may have been added to later, but it seems unlikely.
 4. National Council Executive Bureau Report, July 1926 (F 1926/38).
 5. Expenditure Durban Branch, August 1926 (F 1926/41).
 6. Expenditure Durban Branch, September, 1926 (F 1926/44).
 7. J. La Guma to A.W.G. Champion 5th November, 1926 (F 1926/52).

Durban, then, was comparatively wealthy, but there were limits to the demands that it could meet. There were occasions when the Natal Provincial Secretary lost patience, since there were sufficient calls in the city itself upon the resources of the Branch. "I think I have every right to have the complaint," Champion wrote in late October,

"for having been not assisted by the Union in defending not only actions against Durban Branch but ~~actions~~ actions against the I.C.U. as a whole ... The costs of the Ban of the National Secretary has (sic) absolutely fallen heavily on my shoulders ... I can see that people are always ready to pass cleverly worded resolutions but they will not bother their heads about raising funds.

"What surprises me the most is that the National Secretary himself and the General Secretary are always keen in getting monies banked to go to the Head Office to buy nothing but furniture.

"It seems to me that our officials are more concerned with clean up to date offices with all modern conveniences more than the rights of their fellow workers." (1)

This was not rebellion, but a fit of pique. The feeling that Natal was bearing an unfair burden remained buried and it came to the surface only in 1928.⁽²⁾ In the meantime Head Office's appetite for money continued unappeased. In December Kadalie was still asking Durban to "help us with funds".⁽³⁾

That Durban became the bastion of the I.C.U. in 1926 and disposed of an income that no other branch could match, even Johannesburg, may be attributed to the tireless efforts of A.W.G. Champion, who had a genius for making himself unpleasant

1. A.W.G. Champion to C. Kadalie 21st October, 1926 (F 1926/45).

2. Champion continued to defer to Kadalie. In January, 1927, he asked Kadalie's permission to attend a Dutch Reformed Church Conference at Cape Town. (C. Kadalie to A.W.G. Champion 12th January, 1927, F 1926/52a).

3. C. Kadalie to A.W.G. Champion 29th December, 1926 (E 1926/68).

to those in authority and for fastening upon and exploiting grievances. An indefatigable correspondent, he was for ever sending off hectoring letters to Government officials (including the Chief Native Commissioner of Natal⁽¹⁾), the Durban Native Affairs Department, members of the Durban Joint Council of Europeans and Natives⁽²⁾ and employers, demanding attention and redress of grievances. He took the view that the Native Affairs Department of the municipality worked hand-in-glove with the employers, whose interests were always upheld against the complaints of black workers,⁽³⁾ while the Joint Council he contemptuously dismissed as "a non-Corporation Department of the Municipal Native Affairs".⁽⁴⁾ Litigious by disposition and

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1. The Chief Native Commissioner was the chief target in 1929.
 2. In the months of February and March, 1926, Champion gave no rest to the Rev. J.D. Taylor, the American secretary of the Durban Joint Council. "From the communication we had with you the other day I found that you were not prepared to believe that the natives had complaints which could be classed with those in the Rand. I believe I am justified in trying to acquaint you with them. Here is the native who have (sic) been employed by the month and has put him off without a penny. What has he got to do please? I hope you will be able to direct him the proper procedure (sic) which will assist him." (A.W.G. Champion to J.D. Taylor 5th February, 1926, F/Copies of Letters, 1926/42). Then: "I will be glad to hand over this to your hands so that I will watch who will assist this native. My experience is that these natives are not assisted. The only assistance they get is a letter to the employer and the word of the employer is taken up for good or for bad ... I believe you will do what you can for him and if nothing could be done, I shall be pleased to know and have him attended by us." (A.W.G. Champion to J.D. Taylor 8th February, 1926, F/Copies of Letters, 1926/48). Again: "I am again for the third time sending you another extraordinary instance. This does not mean that I send to you every case, but I want to select some of those of peculiar nature. I want to prove to you that these are not isolated cases. If you care I would send at the average of two cases every day ... My point is that this is a kind of thing that make the speeches as those found on the lips of men like Clements Kadalie and Thaele who are to-day branded as agitators of bad type." (A.W.G. Champion to J.D. Taylor 10th February, 1926, F/Copies of Letters, 1926/51).
 3. A.W.G. Champion to J.D. Taylor 15th February, 1926 (F/Joint Council File/6).
 4. A.W.G. Champion to Secretary, Durban Joint Council 22nd June, 1926 (F/Joint Council File/4).

possessed of no mean knowledge of the law himself, the Provincial Secretary had frequent recourse to the courts. He had many undoubted successes. Although there is an element of truth in the opinion of Champion and his activities expressed by Mr. Justice De Waal in 1929, when he inquired into the riots that took place in Durban that year, it is impossible to accept his assessment of Champion's achievement.⁽¹⁾

"Champion has totally failed in the laudable object he said he had in view of bettering the conditions of the native worker. Where he has had much success, however, is in sowing the seed of discontent in the minds of his fellow natives, less favoured than himself, and in causing much friction between employer and native employee, and between the Borough Council and the natives ..."

Referring to Champion's complaint that the municipal authorities refused to recognise his right to approach them on behalf of the aggrieved, De Waal continued,

"Taking himself seriously, and being very touchy and of a suspicious nature, the alleged denial to him of the right of approach rankled, and has, to my mind, been one of the chief causes that contributed to trouble in recent years between the Borough of Durban and the natives led and guided by Champion.

"But it is not true that he has not had the right of approach. What is true rather is that his manner of approach was unfortunate to a degree ...

"His dealings with the recognised head of the Native Affairs Department. He had not been many months in Durban when the Chief Native Commissioner ... had occasion to rebuke him for the tone of his letters addressed to Layman...⁽²⁾

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1. Report of Commission of Inquiry - Native Riots at Durban 29th July, 1929 (Forman Papers).
 2. The letter, dated 30th August, 1926, is given: "In regard to the somewhat unfortunate relations which exist between yourself and the officials of the Durban Municipal Native Affairs Department, I understand that the latter have taken exception to the terms in which your letters have been drawn up and copies of a number of these letters have been sent to me. The tone of these is undoubtedly more peremptory than the circumstances call for, and I am not surprised that the Municipal Authorities have taken umbrage. I feel that I need only say this to ensure that in future you will be particularly careful in any letters which you may address to the Municipal Authorities to see that they are written in a courteous manner. Courtesy begets courtesy and I feel sure that if you write courteously to the Borough Authorities, they will be prepared to reply equally courteously to you."

"Champion had personal grievances as well. On one occasion he says he was not invited to sit down when he visited Layman at his office. This is denied by Layman. When he had occasion on his arrival in Durban to sleep the night at the barracks he had a brick for a pillow. Uncomfortable for Champion, but he knew of the regulation that natives accommodated at the barracks had to provide their own bedding." (1)

Nevertheless, the Natal Provincial Secretary's legal battles and victories are impressive. "It may be necessary", he wrote in later years, (2)

"to put down on record some of the important cases that were placed by the I.C.U. in the hands of Messrs. Cowley and Cowley, solicitors of Durban, for the ruling of the Courts. These cases had to be taken to the Supreme Court and even the Appellate Division ...

"1. Inspector of Police vs. Champion. This was a case where I was prosecuted for organising the Workers' Club. The prosecution challenged the right of the natives to organise a 'Club'. The Supreme Court ruled that natives had as much right. The African Workers' Club still stands. (3)

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1. "There was a time when I had no bed to lie on in Durban, and my pillow was a brick." (A.W.G. Champion at the Seventh Annual Conference of the I.C.U., 1927, The Workers' Herald 17th May, 1927).
 2. An undated fragment of an apologia in autograph, from internal evidence 1929 or 1930 (Forman Collection, identified only as '4').
 3. Strictly speaking, Champion was not charged with organising a club, but with turning a warehouse into "a meeting and public place" and for disturbing the peace. This was one of his earliest cases and he was optimistic enough to appeal to "all fraternal comrades" for financial support. (A.W.G. Champion to C. Kadalie 18th January, 1926, F/Copies of Letters, 1926/4). Six weeks after his appeal he wrote: "I hope our appeal to comrade Branches will not fall to deaf ears." (A.W.G. Champion to J. La Guma 2nd March, 1926 F/Copies of Letters, 1926/69). The next day, having received a telegram asking why he had not centralised his subscriptions, he complained: "I believe you ought to have appreciated the effort I made to maintaining such a costly case without any other branches assistance." (A.W.G. Champion to General Secretary 3rd March, 1926, F/Copies of Letters, 1926/72).

"2. Inspector vs. Champion. This was a case where I was charged for putting up a gallery without the permission of the Building By Laws Inspector under the Building By Laws. Here again the Supreme Court ruled against the Prosecution. Declaring By Laws ultra vires.

"3. Champion and Sinkwa vs. The Mayor & City Councilors of Durban. This was a case where I was applicant together with a member of the Union calling upon the Council to instruct its servant to register a contract without the objectionable character column. This column was used by unscrupulous employers to spoil the characters of native workers. Once a native was discharged any employer filled in this particular column as he pleased. The native took the pass to the Registration Officer who entered the records in the books of the Durban Corporation. All I.C.U. members were branded as 'bad', 'agitators', 'I.C.U.', and so on. Once the native was given such a qualification he could not obtain a job so I was instructed to take up a test case. It was successful. The Supreme Court ordered that that column was detrimental to the natives. All such contract forms were destroyed. The Council ordered to pay costs of suit. (1)

"4. This was a case where under law of 1869 all natives had to produce a night pass after 9 p.m. This operated harshly against us when we came out of the Workers' Club after meetings and concerts. We challenged the authority of the Law successfully in the Supreme Court. (2)

"5. This was a case where we objected to the bodily dipping of natives after obtaining a special pass to look for work which at that time was bought for 1d. (3)

"6. We objected against native women being compelled to carry passes and being registered in the same manner as males. This objection was upheld by the courts.

1. Sinkwa Ngema was the man's name and he was employed by Champion as a waiter. The Registration Officer had refused to register a contract between the two. After the legal victory a thanksgiving service was held on Cartwright's Flats, the usual venue for open air meetings (31st July, 1926). (Isaziso Somkosi F 1926/39).
2. "The issue is a serious one for Durban. If 'the Kaffir bell' at 9 p.m., with its signal to all law-abiding Natives to be within doors, at that hour, is now to be regarded as a dead letter; if Natives are to be allowed to prowl about the town in the dark hours, without let or hindrance, then the outlook for the European population will be the reverse of cheerful." (Natal Advertiser, quoted The Workers' Herald 15th June, 1926).
- 3¹/₂ Africans arriving in Durban in search of work were "dipped" in a chemical solution to prevent the spread of typhus. "Dipping" was very unpopular indeed. "We do not object to the Medical Examination of anyone, but we do object to be dipped like animals." (A.W.G. Champion to R.W. Clarke 22nd July, 1926, F 1926/33).

"7. We successfully challenged the right of the European matron to lock out for the night all Bantu women who sleep (sic) in the native women's Hostel and even visitors who might arrive after 9 p.m. The practice was very harsh against women.

"8. We challenged the right of farmers to evict natives at any time of the year as soon as they discovered that they were I.C.U. members. The Supreme Court ruled that a native should be given such notice as to allow him to reap his crops and leave after reaping season. We obtained damages against those farmers who had taken the law into their own hands and summarily ejected natives, grasping crops belonging to our native members.

"9. We successfully challenged the Government's refusal to allow Clements Kadali to enter the Province of Natal under Law 48/1884 without being compelled to carry in his possession an inward Pass for at least 7 days as an employee of the I.C.U.

"10. Dhlamini vs. Rex. We obtained a ruling that natives should not be compelled to produce a Registration Ticket in the public street. We deprived the Police of its arbitrary practice.

"11. Five organisers of the I.C.U. were prosecuted for addressing a prohibited meeting. Although we lost this case, we got a ruling in our favour that a general prohibition could not be enforced, that only a particular meeting could be prohibited by the magistrate on being apprehensive of a disturbance. This case went to the Appellate Division.

"12. The case of Abel Ngcobo and the Minister for (sic) Native Affairs. Incidentally this was a case where General Hertzog in his ministerial capacity sued Abel Ngcobo our Natal Provincial Secretary (1) to be ejected from the Inanda Mission Reserve. We pleaded that there was no cause for action. We tendered the rent. The Appellate Court ruled in our favour. It would be interesting to note that the Appellate Court confirmed the finding of the magistrate which had been upset by the Natal Supreme Court Division.

"13. Shumbe and his followers. In this case Rev. I Shumbe and his followers were compelled to submit to vaccination against his religious beliefs. It may be necessary to show our reason to defend this man in his religious beliefs; yes we had to do it because his members were also ours. He appealed to us. We helped him.

"14. Msomi vs. Hubert Davis & Co. This was a case where employers in order to evade the payment of a month's wages in lieu of notice they (sic) entered into a private agreement with natives to be paid weekly and accept a week's notice.

1. Ngcobo was Natal Provincial Secretary after Champion had moved to Head Office.

"The I.C.U. took the matter to the Supreme Court successfully. This case compelled the Town Council of Durban to change its whole Registration System.

"15. Msane vs. Gilbert & Hamer - Compensation for the loss of an eye sight.

"Having won a case in the Cape we sued the big firm of Messrs. Gilbert Hamer & Co. in Durban to pay the worker compensation. We won before the magistrate. We lost in the High Courts. This was a case where the Pass Law was detrimental to the interests of the native workers. (1) The defect in the legislation was subsequently corrected by Parliament.

"16. Durban Railway station had a practice of not allowing native workers to meet their friends on the platform. This we challenged successfully.

"... There are many cases that were taken before the Courts by the natives. There were many others. The cases we mention here a few (sic). Only those that involve a peculiar principle. I have left others... I also leave those which took place outside the Province of Natal. At one time I sued a white man for destroying a membership card belonging to his employee. Sued the Police for breaking into a room of our member without a search warrant. All this cost the money of the I.C.U. We had to do it because as a Union our aim was to establish the name of the I.C.U.

"We completely stopped the exploitation of the native. The staff of the magistrates were increased because we stopped the practice of lining up all the accused natives who are alleged to have committed similar offences. It did not matter whether one had been arrested another area but being charged under one offence they were brought together before the magistrate. (2)

"We stopped the practice of employing the members of the Police to act as interpreters. In many cases such interpreters were not impartial."

"All this cost the money of the I.C.U.". It did indeed. Besides the major cases listed by Champion there was a host of small ones, (3) arising from clashes between individual workers

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1. i.e. rendered Africans ineligible for compensation.
 2. i.e. Africans charged with similar offences, but in different places, were dealt with in batches to save time.
 3. An account of Cowley and Cowley of 31st January, 1927 (Forman Collection) lists 69 cases, mostly against employers, including Durban Corporation.

and employers.⁽¹⁾ Most of the minor cases seem to have concerned the dismissal of workers without pay in lieu of notice.⁽²⁾ Large sums of money went to Cowley and Cowley.⁽³⁾ As Champion put it in the early days of his association with the firm: "Our Legal Advisers charge money for every word they give and for every letter they receive and read." However, he continued, "Any how this firm is the only firm in Natal that is friendly with the natives."⁽⁴⁾ There can be no doubt that Cecil Cowley incurred considerable odium among his white fellow citizens and suffered loss of ordinary business. Champion paid him glowing tribute at the Seventh Annual Conference of the I.C.U. in Durban in April, 1927.

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1. Cf., for example: "I had a small case in Court yesterday with the Major defending. A member from one of the whaling companies was charged on two counts ..." (A. Ngcobo to A.W.G. Champion 13th July, 1926, F 1926/28). The Major was Cecil Cowley, the senior partner of Cowley and Cowley.
 2. Cf. A.W.G. Champion to Registration Officer, Native Affairs Department 12th February, 1926 (F/Copies of Letters, 1926/54) and elsewhere in Copies of Letters, 1926. Not all the grievances that the I.C.U. championed were well-founded. (Cf. Cowley and Cowley to Secretary, I.C.U., Durban 23rd April, 1926 F/Native Mass Meetings (sic)/1).
 3. Sums paid to Cowley and Cowley (in round figures)

March, 1926	£73 (J. La Guma to Champion 4th May, 1926, F 1926/64b).
April, 1926	£20 (Ibid).
August, 1926	£29 (Expenditure of Durban Branch, August, 1926, F 1926/41).
September, 1926	£100 (Expenditure of Durban Branch, September, 1926, F 1926/44).
October, 1926	£189 (Expenditure of Durban Branch, October, 1926, F 1927/49).
November, 1926	£100 (General Funds Accounts, Durban, April, 1927, F 1927/16b).
December, 1926	£91 (Accounts submitted by Cowley and Cowley, Forman Collection).
January, 1927	£445 (Account of Cowley and Cowley 31st January, 1927, Forman Collection).
March, 1927	£200 (General Funds Accounts April, 1927).
April, 1927	£327 (Ibid).
 4. A.W.G. Kadalie to C. Kadalie 12th May, 1926 (F 1926/11).

"I look upon him as the greatest gentleman in Durban - and Natal for that matter. When things were looking black and dark clouds loomed the horizon (sic), Mr. Cowley came to our rescue and showed that he was a sincere friend of the black man. I think that members and delegates will agree that a man who gives up his livelihood for the protection of an inarticulate people is indeed a brave and true man." (1)

Kadalie, from the beginning, was distinctly cooler. "Our legal advisers at Cape Town, Messrs. Dichmont and Dichmont," he wrote in May, 1926, when he was first confronted with Cowley's charges, "do not charge us for perusing our correspondence, interviews and consultations, unless the advice of a counsel is sought for. In this case the charges are too enormous." (2) In the whole of 1926, he later alleged, though probably with some exaggeration, the firm received over £2,000 from the branch at Durban, and perhaps as much again in 1927. (3) In spite of receiving a considerable volume of business from the I.C.U., Cowley also insisted upon a retaining fee, which, for 1927, amounted to £210. (4)

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1. The Workers' Herald 17th May, 1927.
 2. C. Kadalie to A.W.G. Champion 17th May, 1926 (F 1926/13).
 3. Proposals for Curtailing Expenditure at Head Office; Report to the National Council by the General Secretary (C. Kadalie), n.d. (probably January, 1928). £2,000 would have been an average of £166 a month, but in fact it was rare for the I.C.U. to receive a bill of that size in a single month, still rarer to receive a bigger one, though, of course, complete figures have not survived. Kadalie claimed that to challenge his ban the Union had to find £300 (C. Kadalie to A. Creech Jones 1st December, 1926, WH), but that sum should then have been reflected in the surviving figures. It may be presumed that the Cowley costs included fees for counsel and other expenses.
 4. A.W.G. Champion to C. Kadalie 11th February, 1927 (F 1927/3).

While Champion was active with his lawsuits in Durban, two other energetic officials were busy in the Orange Free State and the Transvaal, Keable 'Mote, who had replaced Maduna as Provincial Secretary at Bloemfontein, and Thomas Mbeki, who became Acting Provincial Secretary of the Transvaal in July, 1926, to permit Tyamzashe to devote more of his time to the Complaints and Research Department at Head Office.⁽¹⁾ Both 'Mote and Mbeki were members of the Ginger Group and used appropriate methods, delivering fiery speeches⁽²⁾ and courting arrest.⁽³⁾ Since

1. National Council Executive Bureau Report, July, 1926 (F 1927/3)
2. What their speeches were like can be surmised from articles of theirs appearing in The Workers' Herald of 27th March, 1926. Mbeki attacked the conservative African leadership - "the old bowing-kowing type of leaders ... fit only for the Bible and Catechism days", whose "abject crawling and pleading ... have availed the cause nothing", and he called for "militant activity". 'Mote: "The Smithfield declaration has aroused the dormant aspirations of the peoples of Africa, who have decidedly declared that the year 1926 must bring about their liberation from British Imperialistic domination. No doubt the African Left intransigent must at all cost attend the Johannesburg Labour Conference, seeing the 'Whitecracy' is at war with the black masses ... It is no exaggeration to aver that we want to expropriate the capitalists and by landowners (sic) for the purpose of fulfilling political and economic equality ... We want to emerge from partial nationalisation to a wholesale socialisation of all means of industries (sic) ... we advocate for all workers irrespective of race or creed for (sic) a real living wage; and further we proceed to the advocacy of real live principles as shall rightly inform the masses, and shape the course of respectable organisations to a true militant policy to grappling effectively with the evils of the hour and waging our side of the class war." But one also finds: "I would like to warn some young leaders that they must respect Christianity. The natives must not be given thought for atheism (sic)." To regard the Smithfield declaration as an example of "British Imperialistic domination" seems an odd view of it.
3. In July, 1926, Mbeki was arrested and charged with entering the location and organising a procession in Middelburg, for which he was fined £3. (National Council Executive Bureau, Report, 1926, F 1926/38). 'Mote was one of the first to be arrested under the Native Administration Act of 1927. (T.D. Mveli Skota: Op.cit.).

they tilled a less fertile corner of the vineyard than did Champion and lacked his instinct for the promising lawsuit, their successes were less solid and their contribution to the I.C.U. purse less lavish than his. The impression is inescapable that both men - each termed at one time or another the "Lion of the North" - modelled themselves upon Kadalie, without, however, having his intelligence or subtlety of character. There is something in what C.R. Swart, the Nationalist M.L.A. for Ladybrand,⁽¹⁾ who was shrewd enough to see that Kadalie was no fool, had to say of 'Mote in 1927 during the debate on the Native Administration Bill.

"I agree that Kadalie is a clever man. That cannot be argued away, but I am sorry that so much fuss is being made about so-called leaders who are worth nothing. Take Moti (sic). Are we to make a martyr and a hero of a type like that? He does not deserve it. In my opinion he is a worthless young native who apes everything Kadalie says. Kadalie has the brain, and this he apes without understanding what he is saying. He even says it upside down ..."⁽²⁾

Nevertheless he and Mbeki had much success in arousing support. In the four months October, 1926, to January, 1927, 'Mote opened nine branches in the Orange Free State and Mbeki fourteen in the Transvaal.⁽³⁾

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1. Later the first President of the Republic of South Africa.
 2. Union of South Africa: Debates of the House of Assembly, 1927, Col. 3009. Swart seemed to think that the best way of dealing with the 'Motes of the I.C.U. would have been a good whipping. "I cannot take it amiss in them if the Europeans sjambok these people who exercise that pernicious influence." (Ibid, Col.3010). Swart was later Minister of Justice.
 3. The Workers' Herald 15th February, 1927, which carried a photograph of "these brave I.C.U. workers" on the front page.

In January, 1927, the I.C.U. was claiming a membership of 57,760.⁽¹⁾ This was an advance of 17,760 on its previous claim, of March, 1926.⁽²⁾ Although Durban branch accounted for more than half the increase,⁽³⁾ it is clear that after Kadalie's successful appeal in October, 1926, the Union escaped from its lethargy and many new branches were founded, though it is unlikely that his flouting of the ban had much more to do with the I.C.U.'s revival than the imposition of the ban had with its stagnation. There are two extant branch lists for 1927. The first, a list of those which transferred money to Head Office in the period May - October, 1927,⁽⁴⁾ contains sixty-six branches.⁽⁵⁾ The second list,⁽⁶⁾ which gives the names of those branches that transferred money to Head Office during the period January - December, 1927, adds a further twenty-two.⁽⁷⁾ Whereas two-thirds of the branches in April, 1926, had been in the Cape Province, now, although the Cape still had nineteen of the branches - which are more or less equally shared among the provinces (Natal 24, Orange Free State 22 and Transvaal 23) - in terms of income to Head Office, it was the least important province. The financial support given to Head Office by the branches, province by province, was as follows in 1927:⁽⁸⁾

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1. C. Kadalie to Secretary for Labour 19th January, 1927 (B/Wits).
 2. Investigation and Report; the Natal Provincial and Durban Offices of the I.C.U. 4th April, 1928, Annexure F (F 1928/24).
 3. Ibid.
 4. Statement showing Head Office Income and Expenditure 1st May to 31st October, 1927 (F 1927/107).
 5. See Appendix at the end of the chapter.
 6. Branch Transfers and Requisitions, Year ended 31st December, 1927 (F 1927/107).
 7. See Appendix
 8. Branch Transfers and Requisitions.

Cape Province	£441.9.8.	(3.6%)
Orange Free State	£1052.4.2.	(9.1%)
Transvaal	£3062.19.8.	(26.1%)
Natal	£7138.8.6.	(61.0%)
Total	£11,695.2.0.	

The Cape Province never escaped from that decline that had been noticed by James La Guma on his tour of inspection in 1926. "What is wrong with the Cape?" asked The Workers' Herald of 6th April, 1927. Recalling the past strength of the I.C.U. there, it continued, "But of a sudden, the Cape has made a halt, I was almost tempted to say, it is dead." Although the reasons commonly given for the slump in support were the increase in the poll-tax in the province⁽¹⁾ and unemployment among Africans as a result of the "civilised labour" policy, the writer (probably Clements Kadalie) seemed to think that the cause really lay in the negligence of officials, including Provincial Secretaries and other members of the National Council, and in an outbreak of tribalism. "About three or four members of the National Council run their districts by appealing to tribal jealousies." A new policy and new men were called for.

The sick man of the I.C.U. failed to respond to treatment. In his report of November, 1927,⁽²⁾ A.W.G. Champion, then Acting National Secretary, said that the Cape

1. The Natives Taxation and Development Act (No.41 of 1925) had substituted a uniform poll tax for the differing provincial ones and this had meant a substantial increase for Africans in the Cape, in some cases from 12 shillings a year to 30 shillings.

2. Minutes of the National Council November, 1927 (F 1927/124), p. 13.

"in general has been very slack. In the Eastern Province a few new Branches were opened but Port Elizabeth was dead. In the Western Province there were signs of improvement and more attention will have to be paid to the Cape."

On the same occasion, a meeting of the National Council, R. De Norman, Provincial Secretary for the Western Province, "gave his reasons for Cape Town being slack, among them the collection of National Levy (sic) on the promise that a Hall would be built for Cape Town but instead a Hall was provided for Johannesburg." It is clear that by 1927 the I.C.U. had lost a good deal of support in the docks.⁽¹⁾ The assumption may safely be made that the Union never recovered, in the city of its birth, from the removal of Head Office to Johannesburg in 1926. There is good reason to suppose that the use to which the I.C.U. funds were put in 1926 rankled with the Cape Town members as late as 1928.⁽²⁾ Perhaps, besides, the movement became too African for a membership that was largely Coloured.⁽³⁾

The decline in importance of the area where the I.C.U. gained its first support was accompanied by a pronounced shift from town to country in relative significance. Until 1926 the organisation had a discernible urban bias. By the end of 1925 each of the eleven biggest towns in South Africa (measured by size of European population) had an I.C.U. branch - Johannesburg,

1. Ibid, p.14.

2. Undated and untitled memoir of W.G. Ballinger (c.1953) (B/Wits)

3. An examination of the names of those subscribing to the Nation Levy seems to show that the majority of the Cape Town members were Coloured men and women. (The Workers' Herald 1925 passim) Afrikaans speakers were not catered for in The Workers' Herald after the first five issues in 1923 and the Conferences of the Union were conducted almost exclusively in English.

Cape Town, Durban, Pretoria, Port Elizabeth, East London, Bloemfontein, Pietermaritzburg, Germiston, Kimberley and Benoni. In addition to these branches, almost two-fifths of the total, another six were situated in towns with a European population of more than two thousand, though, of course, this is by no means conclusive evidence that their membership was made up of urban workers. The six were King William's Town, Somerset East and Uitenhage in the Cape and Potchefstroom, Middelburg and Witbank in the Transvaal. Three-fifths, then, of all branches were situated in towns of that size and bigger. The evidence of branch location is confirmed by the 1925 Report of the Commissioner of Police:⁽¹⁾

"A few educated natives have been busy in the towns making inflammatory speeches, mixed up with either religion or politics, but having as their basic tenet the equality of the black and white races. These agitators have had a certain following, but have not been taken seriously by their fellows. It is noteworthy that these pseudo-enlightened natives confine their attention to the towns, probably because they would get very little sympathy or encouragement from the kraal natives."

It is not true that the I.C.U. in its early years was exclusively urban and it has already been shown that in the Eastern Province of the Cape it had a following among wage labourers on the farms, who were badly paid even by South

1. Union of South Africa: Annual Departmental Reports No. 6, Covering the Period 1925-1926 (U.G. 6 - 1927) - Report of the Commissioner of Police for the Calendar Year 1925, p.72-73.

African standards.⁽¹⁾ Never theless, by mid-1927 the rural support had been greatly enlarged and extended to the other provinces of South Africa and, in so far as new support emerged in the Cape Province, it too was among country dwellers. Contemporary observers were well aware of the change that overtook the I.C.U. "While the movement was confined to the towns comparatively little notice was taken of it", wrote a correspondent of The Times in South Africa. "With its spread among farm labourers it caused a great stir".⁽²⁾ Only fifty-seven of the eighty-eight branches listed in 1927 were in towns with a white population of more than two thousand, and many of the other thirty-one, such as Durban, whose membership must have included many people in the Pinetown and Inanda districts, since these had no separate branches, probably drew a proportion of their support from the surrounding countryside.⁽³⁾ The fifty-seven rural branches

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1. "The wages paid in the whole of the districts right from Bedford to Adelaide are probably the lowest in South Africa", said Dr. A.W. Roberts of the Native Affairs Commission in 1927. " ... The Ciskei natives work on the farms round about and the wages are not sufficient to keep body and soul together." (Union of South Africa: Report of the Select Committee on the Subject of the Union Native Council Bill, Coloured Persons Rights Bill, Representation of Natives in Parliament Bill and Natives Land (Amendment) Bill, S.C.10 - 1927 - "The Select Committee on the Subject of Native Bills" - p.23). It is possible that some I.C.U. members in the vicinity of Kimberley were also farm labourers. "We have adopted wrong tactics ... i.e. enlarging our sphere of activity in the country without having first organised the principal industrial centres to the extent required ..." (General Secretary's Report, 6th March, 1926). But he may have been referring to the diamond diggings, such as those at Windsorton.
 2. The Times 10th October, 1927.
 3. Durban branch area reached as far south as Umkomaas on the coast 29 miles away. (A. Ngcobo to A.W.G. Champion 13th July, 1926, F 1926/28).

contributed £6,302.15.2 to Head Office in 1927, that is 53.9% of the total sent in. Country members paid an entrance fee and a monthly subscription of one shilling compared with the two shillings of the urban members, so that, expressed in terms of membership, the £6,302.15.2 contributed by the rural branches represents 10,504 members, while the £5,392.6.10 contributed by the urban branches represents only 4,493 members. This would make a 70% rural membership.⁽¹⁾

The last available list of branches - 58 in all - is one showing the sums of money centralised monthly between November, 1928, and April, 1929.⁽²⁾ Twenty-six of these branches were new and besides these there is evidence for the existence of another eleven new branches,⁽³⁾ which shows that the impetus of the movement carried it on into 1928. The 1928-1929 list excludes Natal, and little information is available for this province. In the case of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal it appears that the summit of the I.C.U.'s influence came at the end of 1927 and the beginning of 1928, the Transvaal reaching the peak rather later than the other province. Out of the twenty-one branches that definitely closed down before November, 1928, eight were situated in the Cape Province, and no new ones took their place. The Orange Free State lost nine and gained sixteen; the Transvaal lost only four and gained twenty-one. Among the thirty-seven

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1. In June, 1927, Kadalie claimed only 16,000 agricultural workers out of a total membership of 80,000. (Facts for the International Labour Conference, B/Wits). It is conceivable that the National Secretary, who was in Europe at the time, was speaking from memory, even guessing.
 2. Statement of Income and Expenditure sent to the President and National Councillors, Kroonstad 21st June, 1929 (B/Wits).
 3. See Appendix

new branches (sixteen in the Orange Free State and twenty-one in the Transvaal) only seven were situated in towns with a European population of more than two thousand (Bloemhof, Boksburg, Klerksdorp, Krugersdorp, Roodepoort, Rustenburg and Vereeniging) and another four resulted from splitting the Johannesburg branch, giving Braamfontein, Newclare, Prospect Township and Sophiatown. With twenty-six of the thirty-seven new branches being indisputably rural, the bias of the I.C.U. towards the countryside was confirmed.

It is scarcely surprising that, once the I.C.U. had broken out of the Cape and established a footing in Durban, Johannesburg and Bloemfontein, it should permeate the countryside and become a rural protest movement. It is not easy, however, to determine the precise nature of the rural support for the Union, since not all Africans in the farming areas had the same grievances. The rural population fell into three classes:-

- (i) Subsistence farmers on land not owned by Europeans. These supplemented their income with wages earned away from home;
- (ii) Squatters and share-croppers on European owned land, who farmed independently upon payment in cash or kind to the landowner and
- (iii) Labourers receiving wages in cash or kind and/or receiving the right to grow some crops and keep some cattle on their employer's land. The second category tended to fade into the third. Frequently the man who was pledged only to a relatively short period of labour service each year, say three months (as was usual in the Orange Free State and the Transvaal), was termed a squatter, while the man who was pledged to an

extended period, say six months (the usual period in Natal), was termed a labour tenant.⁽¹⁾ These different classes and sub-classes had their proper grievances. At the same time there were burdens common to all. Among them was the poll tax, which, as the goad that drove many unwilling Africans into employment and kept many others in debt servitude to farmers who paid it for them,⁽²⁾ was much resented. Until 1925 the tax was much more burdensome in the Orange Free State and the Transvaal than in the Cape and Natal, an injustice that was righted by the Native Taxation and Development Act of 1925, which equalised it in the four provinces. It might be supposed that this Act promoted the cause of the I.C.U. in the Cape (in so far as it did spread there) and Natal, where the tax was levelled upwards, but, although there was some grumbling in the latter province,⁽³⁾ it seems unlikely that it added significantly to the general discontent.⁽⁴⁾

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1. "We did not understand that a squatter was any native who worked less than six months in the year. We should put down 90 days as the minimum number of days he has got to work to exclude his being called a squatter." (J.C. Gilfillan of the Transvaal Agricultural Union, Union of South Africa: The Select Committee on the Subject of Native Bills, p.203).
 2. "Some Natives owe accounts (to farmers) which at the average wage of 10s. per month they can never repay. If they wish to leave their employer he gives them a trek pass but stipulates, for example, 'Pass bearer to look for work. He owes me £5, or £10, as the case may be'. It is almost impossible to find an employer who is willing to engage a strange Native and pay the former employer £10. The result is the Native is nothing less than a slave to the first employer until the debt is paid." (Union of South Africa: Report of Native Economic Commission 1930-1932, p.195).
 3. For example, at Ixopo in April, 1925, when the Act was still in the offing. (Cape Times 6th April, 1925).
 4. Dr. A.W. Roberts did not think that the tax had "added very much to the native unrest". (Union of South Africa: The Select Committee on the Subject of Native Bills, p.39).

Although the unfairness of such an ungraduated tax is manifest, it still cannot be compared as a source of unrest with the widespread, indeed almost universal, shortage of land. The ideal of most Africans was landed independence, an ideal strengthened by the closing of avenues to economic and social advancement in the towns by the industrial colour bar and territorial segregation. Land hunger was undoubtedly acute in the 1920's and gained a new importance in 1926-1927 as a result of the publication and discussions of the Natives Land Act (Amendment) Bill, which was part of General Hertzog's "package deal" aimed at solving the "Native problem". The publication of the Bill had two quite contradictory effects: it heightened fears and raised hopes. One of the aims of the Bill was to reduce squatting, in the broadest sense of the term. If Africans were to be segregated in their own areas, they could gain admission to European areas only as wage labourers, not as independent or quasi-independent farmers raising their own crops and keeping their own cattle. There was, however, also a more rational and more worthy motive as well. Squatters and labour tenants were neither good farmers nor good labourers as a rule. With their obstinate attachment to cattle as a mere measure of wealth, they overgrazed the land and, like the medieval European serfs whose status was so similar, but unredeemed by the spirit of the basis, that was supposed to, and perhaps at its best did, underlie the lord-serf relationship, they gave their services grudgingly and inefficiently. However, whatever the motives behind the intention, the object was indubitably to reduce labour tenancies

and squatting.⁽¹⁾

The Land Amendment Bill aimed at completing the process begun by the original Natives Land Act of 1913, the purpose of which had been to put a stop to African cash and share cropping tenancies in white areas and to restrict independent black farmers to "scheduled land", tribal land already reserved for Africans or land to be set aside by some future arrangement. It is difficult to determine what the precise result of the 1913 Act had been, but it appears that its effects had been largely confined to the Orange Free State.⁽²⁾ In the Cape Province the provisions of the Act restricting African landholding were declared ultra vires, on the ground that they were in conflict with the property qualification for the franchise. Even in the Orange Free State existing tenancies were to run out and in the other two provinces white landlords were permitted to renew such tenancies.⁽³⁾ Moreover, a good deal of illegal squatting, condoned by the Native Affairs Department, went on.⁽⁴⁾ The Chief Native Commissioner,

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1. Chapter II of the Bill proposed the licensing of squatters and labour tenants.
 2. Senator van Niekerk "admitted that the sudden abolition of the share system of ploughing had been a hardship to the Natives in the Orange Free State, the only Province where it was in force to any great extent." (Union of South Africa: Report of Native Affairs Commission for the Years 1927-1931, U.G.26 - 1932, p.22). F. Wilson: Farming, 1866-1966 (In M. Wilson and L. Thompson, eds.: The Oxford History of South Africa, Vol. II, Oxford, 1971), p.127-128 seems to exaggerate the extent of the share system and, consequently, the effects of the 1913 Act (p.130). Senator van Niekerk goes on, "But even had the 1913 Act not been passed economic pressure on the farmers would have done away with it."
 3. H.M. Robertson: The economic condition of the rural natives, p.144.
 4. Union of South Africa: The Select Committee on the Subject of Native Bills, p.118.

Natal, estimated in 1927 that in Natal alone there were then still 185,000 to 200,000 Africans paying rent on European owned land, 95,000 of them on land owned by whites but not farmed by them. There were 360,000 Africans living on land owned and occupied by whites, at least three-quarters of them labour tenants, compared with 550,000 living in the reserves.⁽¹⁾

The treatment and conditions of service of labour tenants varied very widely. Some received no wages at all, but only land (for example, in the northern Transvaal, northern Natal and Zululand); others could earn as much as nearly £30 for a three hundred day working year (in 1928-1929).⁽²⁾ The amount of land provided also varied a great deal, as did the length of service required. Another variation was in the demands made upon the services of the tenant's family. Yet another was in the degree of humanity displayed by employers. Cases of cruelty were reported in the press not infrequently. "In this country how many Africans", asked The Workers' Herald, "are being ill-treated on the farms month after month, plus receiving sjamboks from European farmers but the world knows nothing about it?"⁽³⁾ Many farmers were reluctant to bind themselves to written contracts and tenants complained that promises were not honoured.⁽⁴⁾ "Slavery" was the word often on the lips of Africans when speaking of labour tenancies and sometimes perhaps this was not an exaggeration. As one European farmer put it,

1. The Natal Witness 24th November, 1927.

2. H.M. Robertson: Loc.cit., p.153.

3. The Workers' Herald 27th March, 1926.

4. The Workers' Herald 31st December, 1928. Farmers complained in turn that workers and tenants were unreliable.

"In certain areas you have natives who are under contract to work one fortnight on and one fortnight off, and ... that means that these natives are not at liberty to go and earn money for themselves and their family; they are tied, and I call that a form of slavery." (1)

Another moderate, but unflattering, view of the system was that expressed by Chief Kula of the Msinga district of Natal to the Select Committee on the "Native Bills". (2)

"The conditions prevailing on the farms are not satisfactory from my point of view. The things we do not like about farm life are that the natives are sometimes obliged to get up in the middle of the night to carry out certain duties; the children are sent out to tend the cattle in all sorts of weather and are given a little beker (sic) of mealie porridge, which may be of very indifferent quality; they have to herd the cattle and are held entirely responsible for them, and are to subsist on the little mealie porridge they get. We complain about the food which is given to our people on the farms, which is not satisfactory. Further the liberty of the farm tenant is restricted. He may not keep more than a certain number of cattle, and as for sheep and goats, the farmer will not allow them at all on the land."

Chief Kula was no wild radical.

"I am an old and loyal subject of the Government, and when I am told to put up my hand I do so." (3)

Despite the disadvantages of labour tenancies Africans preferred them to wage labour and they were reluctant to move off white land. The reserves were for the most part grievously over-populated in relation to what the poor farming methods employed there could produce and, in any case, labour tenants were frequently living on the ancestral land that had been taken from them and was the only home they had ever known. If anything,

1. R.D. Doyle of the Transvaal Agricultural Union (Union of South Africa: The Select Committee on the Subject of Native Bills, p.209-210).

2. Ibid, p.387.

3. Ibid, p.387. The chief was referring to voting at the Government sponsored conferences under the Native Affairs Act of 1920.

the trend since the 1913 Land Act had not been towards the reserves, but away from them, into the under-utilised white farms.⁽¹⁾ Now, however, the situation of the labour tenants was deteriorating and the very existence of the tenancies under threat. In 1926 the Masters and Servants Law (Transvaal and Natal) Amendment Act brought the labour tenancy contract within the scope of the Masters and Servants Laws of those two provinces, and this was obviously not done with the interests of the tenant in mind.⁽²⁾ Now the Land Amendment Bill intended to lengthen the period of labour service from ninety to one hundred and eighty days and impose new obligations upon the tenant's family, without giving the protection of a registered contract except in the case of tenancies longer than 180 days.⁽³⁾ What was more, labour tenancies as well as cash and share-cropping tenancies were to be reduced in number and black farmers forced to become a rural proletariat or pushed back into the overcrowded reserves or forced into the towns. Here was a new grievance in the making, though there are indications that farmers were beginning to turn labour tenants off their land anyway because of their reluctance to accommodate large numbers of cattle.⁽⁴⁾

1. H.M. Robertson: Loc.cit., p.152-154.

2. In its passage through the House of Assembly it was attacked by members of the Labour Party who suspected that it aimed to give the farmer control over the tenant's children, and they succeeded in having this explicitly forbidden by the Act. (Union of South Africa: Debates of the House of Assembly, 1926, Col.1282-1286). It was this aspect of the Bill that was criticised at the 1925 Conference of the I.C.U. (The Workers' Herald, 15th June, 1925).

3. Union of South Africa: The Select Committee on the Subject of Native Bills, p.151).

4. "I know in the Western Transvaal there is a definite tendency to use labourers rather than labour tenants, and also in certain parts of Natal." (Dr. A.W. Roberts) (Union of South Africa: The Select Committee on the Subject of Native Bills, p.43). The tendency, however, was by no means universal.

If the proposed Bill added to fears, it also brought hopes. For it promised to "release" more land for African purchase and undoubtedly many thought they would be beneficiaries of land redistribution. In Natal just as many European farmers were going to be expropriated,⁽¹⁾ so many landless blacks looked forward to holding farms of their own. If pessimism could cause restlessness, so could optimism.

"Two months ago several farmers along Mooi River, which is quite apart from any industrial centre were surprised to find after breakfast one morning that their boys had gone on strike because they said they were told the law was that they could live on the white man's farms."⁽²⁾

There is no reason to suppose that the I.C.U. was directly responsible for raising such hopes.

The I.C.U. does not seem to have given particular emphasis to a demand for land, though the land question came up in the speeches of its officials. There is no evidence at all to support the suggestion that propagandists made rash promises

1. "Unfortunately in Natal the word 'give' has been used to such an extent that the farmers all through the country got it into their minds that the Government was going to take these areas and give them to the natives. The owners understood that they were going to be paid but they understood also that this land was going to the natives to be added to their locations to degenerate as their locations are degenerating to-day." (W. Elliot of the Natal Agricultural Union). (Ibid, p.102).

2. W. Elliot (Ibid, p.100).

promises of land to their eager audiences.⁽¹⁾ An examination of speeches that must have reached mainly rural audiences reveals that they were composed largely of general complaints about the political and economic situation of Africans, vague talk of the recovery of freedom and ill-defined threats of the dire consequences of government policy, but certainly no explicit promises of land. If they had a common theme, it was the virtues and values of organisation, of building the I.C.U. into a large and powerful body. At a meeting at Frankfort in the Orange Free State at the end of January, 1927, the "Native Bills", the pass laws and white racialism came under attack, with some side-swipes at British imperialism and the Prince of Wales ("no more brains than a child", but with "a rich father who could spend money on the beggar to run up and down country as he liked"), and there was a threat that the passing of the "Native Bills" "would spell the beginning of Native rule in South Africa". The emphasis of the speeches on that occasion, however, was upon wages. Simon Elias "exhorted his hearers to go back and do their work but they must agitate for more money", and Keable 'Mote said that white employers "should pay the Native labourers better wages. Men working on farms should get a least 4/6 per day ... If the farmer drove them from the farm and withheld their wages, without

1. "For one shilling initial membership fee and 3d. per week, farms were promised to all and sundry." (W.G. Ballinger: Iseeyou, The Nusas, November, 1928, p.21). This story must have originated in the promises made by I.C.U. leaders to evicted labourers that land would be found for them. It is this that Champion must have had in mind at the Conference of December, 1927, when he said, "In Natal and Zululand the authorities were busy taking affidavits as to the bona fides of the I.C.U. promises. If they found out that there was no truth in these statements and promises, they might all be charged with fraud." (The Workers' Herald, 18th January, 1928).

due notice, they should go to court and ruin that farmer if necessary." The Provincial Secretary went on to advise the people "to work, educate (sic) and be obedient to their masters". A resolution was passed asking for the inclusion of farm workers and domestic servants within the scope of the Wage Act. The only reference to land was the accusation that "the English" had stopped the half share ploughing system in the Orange Free State and a resolution calling for a "definite scheme of land settlement" for Africans.⁽¹⁾

Speaking at Graaff-Reinet in the Cape in 1927, Alex Maduna dwelt upon the restrictions placed upon the acquisition of land by Africans but only in the course of an address that was a general indictment of white rules, touching upon Bulhoek, the Port Elizabeth riot, the hypocrisy of missionaries, contract labour, conditions on the mines, capitalism and low wages.⁽²⁾ An I.C.U. speech at Vryheid, Natal, in July, 1927, must have been typical of scores of others.

"Why is it that today men, women and children are all sjamboked to go and work for the farmers without pay? From whom did these Dutch buy these farms? From whom did they conquer them? ... Unless you are united to break your chains, you will always be landless in your own fatherland. Why should you leave the bones of your ancestors and go to strange places? Unite and be one, and you will be able to live in your country, free and happy. Join in your thousands." ⁽³⁾

One wonders what it was that the thousands of farm workers

1. The Frankforter 3rd February, 1927.

2. Unidentified newspaper cutting, c.June, 1927 (B/U&T).

3. G. Coka: The story of Gilbert Coka of the Zulu tribe of Natal, South Africa (In M. Perham, ed.: Ten Africans, London, 1936), p.206.

who flocked to pay their enrolment fees and collect their red membership cards expected to get. Perhaps they were simply buying a promise of a better life.⁽¹⁾ It is difficult to believe that they appreciated the aims and methods of trade unionism. "The people who go about with those tickets make the poor native pay for them", said a Nationalist M.L.A. "It is a kind of speculation."⁽²⁾ Everywhere farmers complained that their labourers were getting "more and more cheeky."⁽³⁾ However, if the finer points of trade unionism were lost on the new members of the I.C.U., they knew where the shoe pinched. Cheekiness seems to have taken the form chiefly of a demand for higher wages. "The position to-day is that our maize crop is not being reaped", complained a Natal M.L.A. "They will not turn out unless they are paid 1s. an hour, which is impossible."⁽⁴⁾ The steady increase over the years in the cost of living had imposed a growing burden that was not relieved much by the deflation that began in 1920. The new protectionist legislation introduced by the Pact Government, at least partly in the interests of white labour, pressed hard upon people whose slender means were now depleted by the

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1. "Thousands of Zulus are joining up. The red ticket of promise is everywhere in evidence. The raw, untutored Zulu is being told (so it is reported) that a new and powerful race of people is to come shortly out of the sea, and an end will then be made of all tyranny and wrong. Those possessing the red ticket will be safe from all violence, while those who have it not will be lost." (The Times 10th October, 1927).
 2. Union of South Africa: Debates of the House of Assembly, 1927, Col.5751.
 3. Ibid, Col.5749.
 4. Ibid, Col.5747.

higher costs of blankets and other imported goods.⁽¹⁾ However, it was not so much because they had to pay more for things that they were accustomed to buy that Africans were in greater difficulties, as because they were compelled to buy a much wider range of commodities as their habits and tastes were modified by contact with a different civilization. Children had to be educated and education was an increasingly expensive good. "In my opinion", said Dr. Roberts of the Native Affairs Commission to the Select Committee on the "Native Bills",

"the natives are getting poorer and so they are compelled to go out to work. They are getting poorer because their wants are increasing; prices have gone up but their wages have remained practically stationary. I will give you a simple indication of this increase in their expenditure. When I first went to Lovedale, the fees charged were £2 per year. A little before that no fees were charged at all. Now the fees are in the neighbourhood of £20. It is the same with clothing. That is rising in price. They must also clothe themselves better now than formerly, so that they are getting poorer simply because their needs are getting more." (2)

It was among the wage labourers and labour tenants that I.C.U. propaganda gained most response. While it is true that subsistence farmers depended to some degree upon cash earnings, dissatisfaction with the amount of money that could be earned was, curiously, in their case an industrial rather than a rural problem, since they derived their cash income from contract labour in the mines, factories, railways and docks. The I.C.U. was affected only to the extent that it had a following in such industries and, since its influence within the compounds was in fact marginal, the Union had little contact with the Africans

1. Union of South Africa: The Select Committee on the Subject of Native Bills, p.179.

2. Ibid, p.20.

from the "territories". Within those "territories" themselves it encountered the conservatism of people and chiefs. The I.C.U. leaders had an understandably ambiguous attitude towards the traditional rulers. On the one hand chiefs were thought to be relics of the past, out of touch with modern conditions, retrogressive and subservient. "Is it not a fact", asked Doyle Modiakgotla at a conference in April, 1925, of the African National Congress, "that chiefs are simply pulled by the nose by the authorities?"⁽¹⁾ On the other hand there remained a considerable fund of respect for them, as the ancient rulers of the people and the custodians of their traditions. Undoubtedly the I.C.U. would have preferred winning their support to earning their displeasure. Kadalié expressed the ambivalent I.C.U. attitude in his report for 1925. He had spent, with A.M. Jabavu, the Senior-Vice-President, a week in the Ciskei, meeting chiefs and holding meetings.

"One might question my wisdom in reporting my meetings with the chiefs, but it is, I consider, of vital importance that ~~we should~~ get in touch with the territories, for is it not there that the Chamber of Mines has a reservoir of cheap and docile labour? The sooner we educate the chiefs and their people that our trade union movement in urban areas does not suggest disloyalty to constituted Government or any disloyalty to the chiefs themselves, but is calculated on a 'bread and butter' struggle for ourselves, our women and children - a holy and noble struggle - we shall then be nearing our goal to economic emancipation ... We are aiming at the building up of a mighty labour organisation in Africa, and it behoves us to spread the gospel of industrial unionism - yes, even unto the territories." (2)

There were instances, here and there, of chiefs adhering to the I.C.U. Chief Diniso Nkosi of Barberton in the Transvaal

1. Cape Times 22nd April, 1925. Modiakgotla was then not yet a member of the I.C.U.

2. The Workers' Herald 28th April, 1926.

was responsible, according to Thomas Mbeki, for bringing into the I.C.U. 1,900 members at one go. This chief took with him to the 1927 I.C.U. Conference at Durban the greetings of none other chiefs from his part of the country and told the assembled delegates of the efforts of the Native Affairs Department to discourage the activities of the I.C.U.⁽¹⁾ Elsewhere the chiefs, either because of the pressure of the authorities or because of their personal distaste for glib young men from the towns, were suspicious and hostile. The Paramount Chief of the Zulus, Solomon ka Dinuzulu, denounced the Union in August, 1927, much to the approval of the Rev. J.L. Dube's Ilanga lase Natal.

"What is uppermost in the minds of the majority of I.C.U. leaders is to secure the 2s.6d. monthly fees rather than to help the Native wage-earners ... Native I.C.U. leaders are exploiting poor Native workers. One of their leaders said, 'Are you not glad that I, a Native, eat up your money rather than that it should be eaten by white people? ... they do not believe in constitutional methods but rather in empty promises and racial hatred. No wonder Solomon ka Dinuzulu is alarmed when he sees these people flocking all parts of the country (sic) with their propaganda.'" (2)

Chief Swayimana of New Hanover District, Natal, was more explicit. "I heard", he said, "that there are people who go about to see what they can pick up. They are thieves and have got their knowledge from other thieves. Who the original thieves were

1. The Workers' Herald 17th May, 1927.

2. 12th August, 1927 A.W.G. Champion complained that Solomon was prejudiced against the I.C.U. by Rev. Dube. "When men who are the accepted leaders of the people play the role of Mr. Facing-both-ways, when they go so far as to mislead ignorant chiefs, members of the royal blood, when ministers of the gospel of Christ stoop so low as to take advantage of the weak to be duped by the mighty, the position becomes deplorable and outrageous." (A.W.G. Champion: The Truth about the I.C.U., p. 26). The meaning is somewhat obscure, but the purport clear enough, especially in the light of what follows.

I do not know."⁽¹⁾ New Hanover was one district where there was no I.C.U. branch and it is significant that the Union as a rule failed to gain a firm footing in the reserves. This failure may have been due to the attitude of the chiefs or to the persistence of communal land holding or to the absence of large numbers of men working on contract. Whatever the reason, there was only one branch in Zululand, at Eshowe;⁽²⁾ none in the Transkeian Territories apart from the one at Kokstad in Griqualand East;⁽³⁾ none in the Ciskei reserves, Middledrift, Keiskamahoe, Glen Grey and Herschel;⁽⁴⁾ and none in the districts of Harrismith, where the Witzieshoek reserve was situated, and Thaba 'Nchu, where the other small Orange Free State reserve was.⁽⁵⁾ Nor did

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1. Union of South Africa: The Select Committee on the Subject of Native Bills, p.385.
 2. This would not preclude individual membership. According to Champion, the people defied the Paramount Chief. (A.W.G. Champion: Mehlomadala; My Experiences in the I.C.U., pamphlet, Durban, n.d., c.1929, p.2. Cf. translation, B/UCT). Cf. The Times 10th October, 1927.
 3. Theo Lujiza was active in the Transkei in 1925, but there is no indication that his results were anything but meagre. (The Workers' Herald, 28th April, 1926). Champion tried to get the movement going there in 1927 and seems to have opened offices at Umtata and Flagstaff, but nothing is known of such branches. (A.W.G. Champion to T.B. Lujiza 12th October, 1927, F Undated MSS/47).
 4. Middledrift had an I.C.U. branch in 1926 and perhaps earlier, but not later. At the 1926 Conference James Dipa claimed to have organised "the whole of the Amagqunukwebe tribe" in the Middledrift area. (The Workers' Herald 28th April, 1926).
 5. Branches were established at Harrismith and Thaba 'Nchu at the end of 1927 (The Workers' Herald 18th January, 1928), but were ephemeral as not to figure in any list of contributing branches. It is possible that their geographical position accounts for the absence of branches there until the tail-end of the I.C.U. expansion, rather than the presence of reserves, which were, after all, very small. Harrismith and Thaba 'Nchu were two of a largish group of new branches in the south and east of the Orange Free State and the northern Cape which sent delegates to the I.C.U. Conference of December, 1927, but, as far as it is known, no money to Head Office.

the I.C.U. penetrate into the northern Transvaal - Pietersburg, Pilgrim's Rest, Potgietersrus and Zoutpansberg - where Africans pursued on white-owned land a way of life that dated back to before the European conquest⁽¹⁾ and where incomes were supplemented by work, not on white farms, but in the mines or domestic service.⁽²⁾

In Basutoland, where Keable 'Mote began proselytising in October, 1927, it is said that Chief Jonathan Molapo Moshoeshoe gave 'Mote "full permission to organise" and that seven branches were opened, including one at Leribe and another at Mafeteng.⁽³⁾ Since almost the whole of the Protectorate fell under customary tenures,⁽⁴⁾ the I.C.U. protest there must have been different in character from that in the Union of South Africa and may have been political rather than economic. It was evidently a nine days' wonder.

In its rapid spread through the countryside the I.C.U. was not without rivals. In Natal the Social and Economic Workers' Union of Africa was founded in August, 1927, at Pietermaritzburg, but little is heard of it except the mere fact of its establishment. There was some indignation in I.C.U. circles because it made use of a membership card almost identical to their

1. H.M. Robertson: Loc.cit., p.143.

2. Union of South Africa: The Select Committee on the Subject of Native Bills, p.167, 205.

3. The Workers' Herald 18th January, 1928.

4. B.M. Jones: Land Tenure in South Africa - Past, Present and Future (Pietermaritzburg, 1965), p.22, 23.

own.⁽¹⁾ The Transkei was pre-empted by a more serious competitor, the ingenious and romantic Dr. Wellington, alias Elias Buthelezi, a former pupil of Lovedale, who had been convicted a number of times for practising medicine without a license. Representing himself as an American, he propagated the doctrines of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, though he seems to have been a free-lance. Some Europeans thought he was connected in some way with the I.C.U.⁽²⁾

Dr. Wellington was not merely anti-white, but also anti-missionary. Since the I.C.U., too, was widely suspected of being both, some missionaries warned their people against joining the Union.⁽³⁾ The well-known Catholic missionary, Fr. Bernard Huss

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1. The Workers' Herald 15th September, 1927. The Constitution and Rules of the organisation (F 22/T) is a curious and somewhat rudimentary document, which, however, owes something to the I.C.U. Constitution. One of its 24 sections lays down the colour of the membership ticket. An entrance fee of no less than ten shillings indicates either extreme pessimism or extreme optimism.
 2. The Churchman October, 1927; A.W.G. Champion: My second visit to the Cape Province, undated fragment in the Forman Collection. Oddly enough, when Dr. Wellington was arrested on one occasion, his lawyers asked the I.C.U. if it was interested in putting up the money for a case against the Government for wrongful arrest. (A.W.G. Champion to C. Kadalie 4th March, 1927, F 1927/7).
 3. "Almost all the members here in town have deserted the cause, because one of the churches has threatened to excommunicate any one of its members who attends I.C.U. meetings." (Branch Secretary, Ficksburg). (I.C.U. News Letter 5th December, 1928). Ndaba Zabantu warned Catholics against joining the Union on the ground that Kadalie did not pray. (Ilanga lase Natal 24th June, 1927).

of Mariannhill in Natal,⁽¹⁾ is alleged to have said, in the course of an interview given to the Natal Advertiser,

"Everywhere the Native is no longer seeking knowledge, but only revenge against the Europeans. Where at one time I would have been heard with respect, I am faced with bitter antagonism and bombarded with questions, and this is symptomatic of the new attitude of thousands of Natives through the growth of this deadly threat to the peace of the country - the I.C.U." (2)

Although he subsequently claimed that he had been wrongly reported and that he had "frequently emphasised and defended the good points of the I.C.U.",⁽³⁾ he was not spared the taunts of The Workers' Herald, which called him a "political parson", who would be spending his time "more profitably, nobly and Christianly by agitating for the abolition of the Pass Laws, and all other iniquitous legislation affecting both Europeans and non-European workers of South Africa, than by rushing into print with foundationless and unworthy political rigmaroles."⁽⁴⁾

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1. Fr. Huss was a Bavarian priest, who came to South Africa in 1895. He was Principal of the Teachers' Training College at Mariannhill. Professor H.M. Robertson has kindly furnished the following note: "Bernard Huss was a representative of the 'Green Revolution' branch of Catholic thought (which greatly influenced the issue of the encyclical Quadragesimo Anno), with an opposition to both industrialism and communism stemming from a nostalgic wish to see a reversion to small gild industry and widespread peasant proprietor agriculture, with widely distributed ownership of the land by agriculturalists who were 'whole men', voluntarily associated in agricultural co-operative societies. It was a genuine warm opposition of contrasted ideals, not a cold hostility of an educated European against brash uneducated African pretensions."
 2. The Workers' Herald 15th September, 1927.
 3. The Workers' Herald 15th October, 1927.
 4. The Reverend Father Huss makes a Fuss (The Workers' Herald 15th September, 1927) and More about Huss's Fuss - Crocodile Tears (The Workers' Herald 15th October, 1927). Fr. Huss was also chided by The Star for making "sweeping generalisations". (Quoted The Workers' Herald 15th September, 1927).

The farmers, of course, clamoured for action by the authorities. The I.C.U. itself admitted that "a few inexperienced young organisers of the I.C.U. are not very circumspect in their choice of language".⁽¹⁾ However, there is much truth in its claim that the farmers did

"not so much object to the alleged improper expressions of certain I.C.U. organisers. These farmers are against the movement as a whole, whether its organisers are reasonable or unreasonable men." ⁽²⁾

Not all I.C.U. speakers were wild men. "I can vouch for the fact that there was no seditious or insulting language made use of", said one police witness of an I.C.U. meeting in October, 1927.⁽³⁾ "My text", said the branch secretary of Vredefort, O.F.S., "was: 'This is the Hour of Peace and Fair Wages to all Workers in South Africa'".⁽⁴⁾ "I am trying with all my level best", declared the I.C.U. man at Ixopo, Natal, "to use moderation and diplomacy when Europeans are present, even if they are absent, because I know that they send in the 'watch dogs' to attend our meetings."⁽⁵⁾

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1. The Workers' Herald 15th September, 1927. But such speeches were not confined to minor officials. "It was oration (sic) like that of 'Mote", said Kadalie at the December, 1927, Conference, referring to the eviction of farm workers, "that caused many people not to have homes." (The Workers' Herald 18th January, 1928).
 2. The Workers' Herald 15th September, 1927.
 3. The Natal Witness 29th October, 1927.
 4. The Workers' Herald 15th September, 1927.
 5. Branch Secretary, Ixopo to A.W.G. Champion 25th August, 1927 (F 1927/466). This man, N.J. Mcunu, also said, "There are some amongst our leaders who are inclined to use inflammatory speeches at a public meeting attended by our opponents."

As early as June, 1927, farmers' associations passed resolutions calling upon members to take action against labourers who belonged to the I.C.U.⁽¹⁾ At a congress specially summoned in August to consider "the I.C.U. danger", the Natal Agricultural Union resolved to take measures (possibly in the form of a Farmers' Vigilance Association) for the protection of farmers "against unjust and unreasonable action of trade union organisations and communistic bodies", to send a deputation to wait on the Prime Minister and to request a prohibition of meetings unauthorised by a magistrate.⁽²⁾ There was large-scale eviction of tenants and even reports of huts being burnt down.⁽³⁾ Not unnaturally, the Government was not in favour of eviction, but preferred to use a new weapon then at hand, the recently passed Native Administration Act, which was at least partly intended to fulfil the purpose of the abortive Sedition Bill. In August, 1927, the Secretary for Native Affairs warned the I.C.U. that the Act would be brought into operation on 1st September and that it had better exercise restraint.⁽⁴⁾ At

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1. In June the Natal Agricultural Union in a special congress discussed the policy of evicting I.C.U. members. (Ilanga lase Natal 24th June, 1927). In July the Reitz and District Farmers' Association (O.F.S.) resolved upon the eviction of I.C.U. members, prosecution for trespass of those found on farms without permission and a boycott of businesses employing I.C.U. members. (The Star 18th July, 1927).
 2. The Star 19th August, 1927.
 3. E. Lewis: The Geneva spirit; an appeal for the native trade (B/UCT), published in The Star 16th November, 1927.
 4. The Star 19th August, 1927.

the local level it was common for Native Commissioners to order I.C.U. organisers out of their districts⁽¹⁾ and for municipalities to close their locations to Union officials or to prosecute them for contravention of location regulations.⁽²⁾ The sort of harassment to which branches were subjected can be seen from a report made in 1928 by the secretary of a Transvaal district that included Volksrust and Wakkerstroom.

"Since the establishment of these branches - in August and September respectively last year, the employers, especially farmers, developed a very hostile attitude towards members in their employ. Their hostile policy was vigorously carried out by ejecting from their farms and by prosecuting any man or woman they discovered to be a member of the Union. Members were so prosecuted (sic) that they were afraid even to enter the Organisation's Offices for the payment of their dues ...

"To facilitate payments of contributions meetings were held every Sunday. This was promptly followed by the refusal of the masters to issue 'special passes' to the workers to attend meetings. Workers ventured to go without passes. At Wakkerstroom the Police adopted a similar attitude by organising special patrols on Sundays for carrying out their duties under the pass laws. Huge sums were collected by the Court in fines. Representations were made to the Police Authorities and to the Ministers in vain; for on investigations, it was found that the Police were only carrying their duties (sic) under the laws.

"This persecution culminated in large sums of money being spent in defending and assisting victimised members in order to keep their confidence in the Union. During March of this year, the evictions reached the climax, just in the critical time of the year. Large numbers of families were forced to leave their crops and filled the public roads.

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1. Telegram D. Labase to I.C.U. Head Office 16th August, 1927 (F 1927/40). Labase had been given twenty-four hours' notice to leave Barberton.
 2. The Workers' Herald 18th January, 1928; Minutes of the National Council November, 1927 (F 1927/124) and January, 1928 (F 1928/1). The I.C.U. was not necessarily welcomed by the location residents. In Winburg, O.F.S., "a strong opposition party, headed by prominent members of the Winburg community launched out a vigorous attack and by vague and unsound representations to the Europeans determined to oust the I.C.U." (The Workers' Herald 18th January, 1928).

"Funds were much crippled. The Municipalities of both the towns restricted entrance into their locations of natives ejected from farms; and things grew from bad to worse, since these families had nowhere to live in the districts ..." (1)

Farmers were not uniformly hostile and self-righteous.

"Farmers had themselves to blame", declared one at an Orange Free State agricultural congress at the end of September, 1927, "if natives complained that they were treated like slaves."⁽²⁾ Nor was the I.C.U. agitation without positive effect. The Reitz farmers in July, 1927, not only recommended evictions, but also proposed the drawing up of a uniform scale of payment.⁽³⁾ The Orange Free State farmers drew up a resolution to be submitted to the South African Agricultural Union congress calling for "a uniform system of contracts with labourers". Clearly what the farmers had in mind was the worst conditions of service that would find general acceptance among employers, since the resolution went on to suggest that "in the various areas, districts or circles conferences should be held to fix a uniform maximum wage for labourers for the different farming operations".⁽⁴⁾ Nevertheless, it can be assumed that a uniform system of contracts and even a uniform maximum wage would have given many labourers better terms than they were getting at the time. At all events the I.C.U. welcomed the resolution.⁽⁵⁾

1. L.A. Mazibuko: Report on Volksrust and Wakkerstroom, attached to the News Letter of 5th December, 1928, and also published in The Workers' Herald 31st December, 1928.

2. The Natal Witness 1st October, 1927.

3. The Star 18th July, 1927.

4. A.W.G. Champion to Secretary, South African Agricultural Union Congress 28th October, 1927 (F 1927/99a).

5. Ibid.

White resentment sometimes erupted into violence, especially in Natal. At Bergville soldiers broke into the I.C.U. office and burnt books and papers.⁽¹⁾ At Greytown, Weenen and Kranskop, in March, 1928, the I.C.U. offices were burnt and the Pietermaritzburg office had to be given police protection.⁽²⁾ The rage of the white mob is said to have been aroused by the desecration of the Greytown cemetery in February, 1928, by one Gwaza, thought to be a member of the I.C.U.⁽³⁾ The alleged culprit was in fact a renegade from the I.C.U. who had attempted in the previous year to form a rival union, the Northern Trade Native Union (sic).⁽⁴⁾ I.C.U. officials were sceptical of his guilt. Abel Ngcobo thought it impossible "for one man to pull down approximately 100 tomb stones in one night - or, rather, in a few hours' time", and he evidently suspected white provocation in the shape of a "Black-hand gang".⁽⁵⁾ He further complained that the police were dilator at Greytown in providing protection for the I.C.U. office.⁽⁶⁾ What added to the indignation of the Union was that the Weenen arsonists were sentenced to an absurd one pound fine.⁽⁷⁾

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1. Minutes of National Council November, 1927, p.15 (F 1927/124).
 2. C. Kadalie: My Life and the I.C.U., p.161-162.
 3. Union of South Africa: Report of the Commissioner of Police for the Year 1928-1929 (U.G.13 - 1930), p.10. Gwaza, who was nearly lynched, escaped disguised as a policeman. (The Workers' Herald 12th May, 1928).
 4. Chief Native Commissioner, Natal to A.W.G. Champion 17th November, 1927.
 5. The Workers' Herald 12th May, 1928.
 6. Ibid.
 7. The Star 27th March, 1928.

The invasion of the countryside paid the I.C.U. enormous short-term rewards in both membership and income, but it saddled the Union with insoluble problems that remained after there was no more money to part with. As the district secretary of Volksrust and Wakkerstroom put it,

"The above branches are supported by agricultural workers whose labouring conditions and wages are such that they cannot pay their dues regularly weekly or monthly. The only period during which farm squatters handle money at all is between the months of July and September, after gathering their scanty crops." (1)

The I.C.U. income of 1927 was to a considerable degree a non-recurring levy on peasants who wanted immediate relief. To use an appropriate metaphor, it was a windfall.

APPENDIXBranches Transferring Money to Head Office, May-October, 1927.

Adelaide (C.P.), Barberton (T.), Bergville (N.), Bethal (T.), Benoni (T.), Bloemfontein (O.F.S.), Brandfort (O.F.S.), Bulwer (N.), Caledon (C.P.), Dundee (N.), Durban (N.), East London (C.P.), Ermelo (T.), Eshowe (N.), Estcourt (N.), Ficksburg (O.F.S.), Frankfort (O.F.S.), Grahamstown (C.P.), Graaff-Reinet (C.P.), Greytown (N.), Harding (N.), Heidelberg (T.), Heilbron (O.F.S.), Hendrina (T.), Ixopo (N.), Jagersfontein (O.F.S.), Johannesburg (T.), Kimberley (C.P.), King William's Town (C.P.), Kranskop (N.), Kroonstad (O.F.S.), Ladybrand (O.F.S.), Ladysmith (N.), Lindley (O.F.S.), Lydenburg (T.), Machadadorp (T.), Mafeking (C.P.), Mapumula (N.), Mossel Bay (C.P.), Nelspruit (T.), Newcastle (N.), Parys (O.F.S.), Paulpietersburg (N.), Pietermaritzburg (N.), Piet Retief (T.), Port Shepstone (N.), Pretoria (T.), Reitz (O.F.S.), Richmond (N.), Senekal (O.F.S.), Stanger (N.), Standerton (T.), Theunissen (O.F.S.), Umzinto (N.), Umzimkulu (C.P.), Volksrust (T.), Vrede (O.F.S.), Vryheid (N.), Weenen (N.), Wepener (O.F.S.), Winburg (O.F.S.), and Windsorton (C.P.), (66 branches).

Other branches Transferring Money to Head Office in 1927.

Belfast (T.), Bethlehem (O.F.S.), De Aar (C.P.), Germiston (T.), Koppies (O.F.S.), Kokstad (C.P.), Louwsberg (N.), Middelburg (T.), Oogies (T.), Oudtshoorn (C.P.), Petrus Steyn (O.F.S.), Port Elizabeth (C.P.), Randfontein (T.), Simonstown (C.P.), Springfontein (O.F.S.), Springs (T.), Touws River (C.P.), Vredefort (O.F.S.), Waterval Boven (T.), Wasbank (N.), Zastron (O.F.S.) and Witbank (T.). (22 branches).

Among these twenty-two branches, which contributed sometime

in the course of 1927, but not during the six months 1st May - 31st October, one might expect to find something that ceased to centralise funds after the end of April. Yet of these twenty-two there is evidence for the existence of only five before 1st May, 1927, viz. Germiston, Middelburg, Port Elizabeth, Randfontein and Witbank. Since Germiston, Middelburg and Port Elizabeth appear on later lists, the only demises before 1st May must have been Randfontein and Witbank. As for the remaining seventeen branches, though the possibility exists that they were founded before 31st October, 1927, but did not contribute to Head Office until after that date, it seems more likely that they were post-31st October foundations. Bethlehem, De Aar (a revival, **not** a new foundation), Kokstad, Koppies, Oogies, Petrus Steyn and Springs appear on a later list. This leaves ten branches that were born and died either sometime between March, 1926, and April, 1927, or sometime after October, 1927, viz. Belfast, Louwsberg, Oudtshoorn, Simonstown (also a revival), Springfontein, Touws River (another revival), Vredefort, Wasbank, Waterval Boven and Zastron. There is good evidence that Simonstown died in January, 1928, and some evidence that it was revived only in November, 1927.⁽¹⁾ Wasbank sent a delegate to the April, 1928, Conference of the I.C.U.⁽²⁾

A comparison of the 1927 lists with the 1926 ones shows that, of the twenty-nine branches of March, 1926, the following had disappeared for good:- Alexandria, Bedford, Humansdorp,

1. Webber, Wentzel, Solomon and Friel to W.G. Ballinger 13th August, 1928 (B/Wits).

2. The Workers' Herald 12th May, 1928.

Middledrift, New Brighton, Retreat, Somerset East, Stutterheim and Uitenhage, most of them forming part of that old aggregation of branches in the Eastern Province.⁽¹⁾ Douglas is unmentioned in 1927, but apparently maintained its ghostly existence to reappear in a later list.

Branches Established or Revived after April, 1926 and before December, 1927.

Barberton (T.), Bergville (N.), Bethal (T.), Belfast (T.), Bethlehem (O.F.S.), Brandfort (O.F.S.), Bulwer (N.), Caledon (C.P.), Carolina (T.), Colenso (N.), De Aar (C.P.), Dundee (N.), Ermelo (T.), Eshowe (N.), Estcourt (N.), Ficksburg (O.F.S.), Frankfort (O.F.S.), Graaff Reinet (C.P.), Grahamstown (C.P.), Greytown (N.), Hendrina (T.), Harding (N.), Heidelberg (T.), Heilbron (O.F.S.), Ixopo (N.), Jagersfontein (O.F.S.), Koppies (O.F.S.), Kokstad (C.P.), Kranskop (N.), Kroonstad (O.F.S.), Ladybrand (O.F.S.),

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1. There is a surviving report on the Eastern Province branches by the Provincial Secretary, A.P. Maduna, dated 13th October, 1927 (F 1927/85). Alexandria, Bedford, Middledrift, Stutterheim and Uitenhage are unmentioned. Humansdorp is "so quiet"; Somerset East "such a wrangling place"; New Brighton still in rebellion. Altogether Maduna paints a dismal picture. His comment upon Port Elizabeth is worth repeating.

"This most admired but appalling (sic) Branch, is just about as I left it in May when I went into country (sic), and as I have often intimated in my letters, its committee was very bad, and as the composition of the people are of a pliable wig (sic), they were always wavering just as the wind blow them (sic), however, having dissolved that Committee and last sunday (sic) appointed a fresh one I am now watching the developments of the reinforcements, which on their face value looks promising, for these men were good ever since they have been in the Union. In spite of all that I have already related you about this place I am still hopeful of reorganising it, as it is I am preparing to meet the New Brighton rebels on monday (sic) evening."

Ladysmith (N.), Lindley (O.F.S.), Louwsberg (N.), Lydenburg (T.), Machadadorp (T.), Mafeking (C.P.), Mapumula (N.), Mossel Bay (C.P.), Nelspruit (T.), Newcastle (N.), Oogies (T.), Oudtshoorn (C.P.), Parys (O.F.S.), Paulpietersburg (N.), Petrus Steyn (O.F.S.), Piet Retief (T.), Pietermaritzburg (N.), Port Shepstone (N.), Reitz (O.F.S.), Richmond (N.), Senekal (O.F.S.), Simonstown (C.P.), Springfontein (O.F.S.), Springs (T.), Standerton (T.), Stanger (N.), Theunissen (O.F.S.), Touws River (C.P.), Umzinkulu (C.P.), Umzinto (N.), Volksrust (T.), Vrede (O.F.S.), Vredefort (O.F.S.), Vryheid (N.), Wasbank (N.), Waterval Boven (T.), Weenen (N.), Wepener (O.F.S.), Winburg (O.F.S.), and Zastron (O.F.S.).
(71 branches).

Branches 1928-1929.

Barberton (T.), Bethlehem (O.F.S.), Bloemhof (T.), Bothaville (O.F.S.), Braamfontein (T.), Carolina (T.), Cathcart (C.P.), Christiana (T.), Clocolan (O.F.S.), De Aar (C.P.), Douglas (C.P.), East London (C.P.), Ficksburg (O.F.S.), Fochville (T.), Fouriesburg (O.F.S.), Frankfort (O.F.S.), Germiston (T.), Graaff Reinet (C.P.), Heidelberg (T.), Heilbron (O.F.S.), Johannesburg (T.), Kimberley (C.P.), Klerksdorp (T.), Kokstad (C.P.), Koppies (O.F.S.), Kroonstad (O.F.S.), Krugersdorp (T.), Lichtenburg (T.), Lindley (O.F.S.), Lydenburg (T.), Machadadorp (T.), Mafeking (C.P.), Maquassi (T.), Marquard (O.F.S.), Newclare (T.), Nigel (T.), Nylstroom (T.), Oogies (T.), Petrus Steyn (O.F.S.), Port Elizabeth (C.P.), Pretoria (T.), Prospect Township (T.), Rysmiersbult (T.), Roodepoort (T.), Rustenburg (T.), Schweizer Reneke (T.), Sophiatown (T.), Springs (T.), Standerton (T.), Tweeling (O.F.S.), Vereeniging (T.), Ventersburg (O.F.S.), Viljoenskroon (O.F.S.), Volksrust (T.), Wakkerstroom (T.), Weenen (N.), Welverdiend (T.), Wepener (O.F.S.) (58 branches).

The only Natal branch included is Weenen; no others, partly because of the secession of the Durban branch in May, 1928, taking other Natal branches with it, partly because of the collapse of support in many parts of the province. Apart from the Natal branches the following thirty-five that figured on the list of December, 1927, are found no longer:-

Adelaide (C.P.), Benoni (T.), Bethal (T.), Bloemfontein (O.F.S.), Belfast (T.), Brandfort (O.F.S.), Caledon (C.P.), Cape Town (C.P.), Ermelo (T.), Grahamstown (C.P.), Hendrina (T.), Jagersfontein (O.F.S.), King William's Town (C.P.), Ladybrand (O.F.S.), Middelburg (T.), Mossel Bay (C.P.), Nelspruit (T.), Oudtshoorn (C.P.), Piet Retief (T.), Parys (O.F.S.), Randfontein (T.), Reitz (O.F.S.), Senekal (O.F.S.), Simonstown (C.P.), Springfontein (O.F.S.), Theunissen (O.F.S.), Touws River (C.P.), Umzimkulu (C.P.), Vrede (O.F.S.), Vredefort (O.F.S.), Waterval Boven (T.), Winburg (O.F.S.), Windsorton (C.P.), Witbank (T.), and Zastron (O.F.S.).

Two of these, Randfontein and Witbank, had apparently disappeared before May, 1927. Adelaide was still alive in November, 1928, but in a sad state.⁽¹⁾ Benoni and Bloemfontein (as well as Germiston, Heidelberg, Klerksdorp and Standerton) were inspected from Head Office in September or October, 1928, and their branch secretaries reprimanded.⁽²⁾ Bethal seems to

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1. "No contributions were forthcoming; and ... the office rent was being paid by the collections of a few members of the Executive." (I.C.U. News Letter, 5th December, 1928, (B/UCT)).
 2. "In all these places the manner in which the monies of the Organisation have been handled by branch secretaries and collectors is shockingly disgraceful." (I.C.U. News Letter, 19th October, 1928).

have survived, or perhaps subsequently revived for a time.⁽¹⁾ Ermelo was still in existence in November, 1928;⁽²⁾ likewise Cape Town and King William's Town.⁽³⁾ Ladybrand apparently lasted into 1929.⁽⁴⁾ Middelburg receives mention in December, 1928;⁽⁵⁾ Piet Retief as late as 1930.⁽⁶⁾ Parys was certainly still alive in March, 1929.⁽⁷⁾ Simonstown, as has already been noted, died probably in January, 1928. Vredefort (and Parys) were described in November, 1928, as "to all intents and purposes quite dead".⁽⁸⁾ Winburg appears again in June, 1929.⁽⁹⁾ The other nineteen disappeared without trace.

The following twenty-six branches were not on the 1927 lists.

Bloemhof (T.), Bothaville (O.F.S.), Braamfontein (T.), Christiana (T.), Clocolan (O.F.S.), Fochville (T.), Fouriesburg (O.F.S.), Klerksdorp (T.), Lichtenburg (T.), Maquassi (T.),

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1. W.G. Ballinger to W. Holtby 10th April, 1929 (B/Wits).
 2. News Letter 5th December, 1928.
 3. Ibid.
 4. District Secretary, Kroonstad, to General Secretary 21st March, 1929 (B/Wits).
 5. News Letter 5th December, 1928.
 6. District Secretary, Piet Retief, to W.G. Ballinger 16th January, 1930 (B/UCT).
 7. District Secretary, Kroonstad, to General Secretary 21st March, 1929.
 8. News Letter 21st November, 1928.
 9. Administrative Report 20th June, 1929 (B/Wits).

Marquard (O.F.S.), Newclare (T.), Nigel (T.), Nylstroom (T.), Prospect Township (T.), Roodepoort (T.), Rustenburg (T.), Rysmierbult (T.), Schweizer Reneke (T.), Sophiatown (T.), Tweeling (O.F.S.), Ventersburg (O.F.S.), Vereeniging (T.), Viljoenskroon (O.F.S.), Wakkerstroom (T.), and Welverdiend (T.).⁽¹⁾

In addition to these twenty-six new names, branches existed, there is evidence to show, at Edenville, Hoopstad and Odendaalstrust, all in the Orange Free State.⁽²⁾ Some evidence exists for branches also at Kestell, Paul Roux, Dewetsdorp, Excelsior, Thaba 'Nchu and Wesselsbron in the Orange Free State and Wolmaranstad in the Transvaal.⁽³⁾ In 1928 there must have been eighty-two branches, excluding the whole of Natal except Weenen, made up of the fifty-eight of the 1928-1929 list, fourteen others known to have survived into 1928 and a further ten that did not appear on any of the lists considered so far.

There remains one further list to record, composed of places that sent delegates to the Special Conference of the I.C.U. at Kimberley in December, 1927.⁽⁴⁾ It includes the following which are on the 1928-1929 list, but not on the previous ones - Clocolân (O.F.S.), Fouriesburg (O.F.S.), Marquard (O.F.S.), Ventersburg (O.F.S.), and Viljoenskroon (O.F.S.), and also Kestell (O.F.S.), for which there is other evidence for the

1. Douglas, though not on the 1927 lists, was not a new branch in 1929.

2. News Letter 5th December, 1928.

3. Free State Itinerary, December, 1928 (B/UCT).

4. List of delegates to the Special Conference of the I.C.U. December, 1927 (F 1927/134).

existence of a branch.⁽¹⁾ In addition there is a number of places which figure on no other list at all:-

Bethulie (O.F.S.), Boksburg (T.), Fauresmith (O.F.S.), Harrismith (O.F.S.), Hobhouse (O.F.S.), Hopetown (C.P.), Koffiefontein (O.F.S.), Steynsrus (O.F.S.), Taung (C.P.), and Warden (O.F.S.).

Towns with a European population of more than two thousand which never had an I.C.U. branch.

Aliwal North, Brakpan, Beaufort West, Cradock, George, Malmesbury, Middelburg (Cape), Paarl, Pietersburg, Queenstown, Stellenbosch, Somerset Strand, Robertson, Wellington, and Worcester.

Of these towns the following had an African population of less than one thousand (although they all had substantial Coloured populations):- George, Malmesbury, Paarl, Middelburg (Cape), Robertson, Somerset Strand, Stellenbosch, Wellington and Worcester.

Beaufort West had an African population of only just past the thousand and there is evidence of I.C.U. activity there in 1923.⁽²⁾ Although the Union appears to have been active in the area of Cradock and Queenstown,⁽³⁾ it also appears that its influence never reached any further north from East London and Port Elizabeth than Cathcart and Adelaide and, later on, Graaff

1. Free State Itinerary.

2. Cape Times 26th August, 1923.

3. The Workers' Herald 28th April, 1926.

Reinet. It is conceivable that this was the result of the influence of a hostile Bantu Union. The contract dock labourers in Cape Town were mostly members of the Bantu Union and would have nothing to do with the I.C.U. in the years following the great dock strike.⁽¹⁾ Aliwal North, despite its curious connection with the labour movement in East London and Port Elizabeth in 1920, was on the edge of an area of the Cape Province that remained outside I.C.U. influence. Pietersburg, too, was in an area, the northern Transvaal, that was not penetrated. Of all the towns without I.C.U. branches, the most surprising is Brakpan: if Germiston and Benoni, why not Brakpan? It is possible it had a branch that did not survive long enough to be included in extant lists; that local white hostility proved too strong; or that, by chance, it lacked people on the spot sufficiently capable or energetic or opportunistic to organise a branch. There must be some significance in the fact that Boksburg in the same area had a branch that was so weak as to escape inclusion in the lists of contributing branches. Perhaps both Brakpan and Boksburg were catered for most of the time by Germiston and Benoni.

1. The Workers' Herald 28th April, 1926.

CHAPTER VI

In Darkest Europe, 1927.

"Perhaps another person would have hesitated to penetrate so deep into the heart of Europe unaccompanied, but for me I left my fears behind in Africa to tell the story of a New Africa in the making".

(C. Kadalie in his autobiography).

Ethelreda Lewis had hoped that the expulsion of the Communists by the National Council in December, 1926, and the application for affiliation to the International Federation of Trade Unions would soften the attitude of the Government towards the I.C.U. and she did not delay to point out to General Hertzog the turn for the better in the Union's affairs. "It is surely better", she wrote to the Prime Minister,

"to have Kadalie, with his undoubted power over fifty thousand natives, on the side of reasonable trade union ambitions for the black man than to leave him as a useful catspaw to men of the Moscow type, who within the last twelve years have done untold harm to South Africa by means of the native. I would go further, Sir, and say that Kadalie, as leader of a law-abiding labour organisation of natives, is likely to be far more use in South Africa than if he were a docile nonentity amongst a small group of natives who are content to be influenced by the Joint Council, great as their pioneer work has been. You, as an individualist, will recognise that it is the individual and not the organised nonentities who possess power to save as well as to destroy. And to find an individual amongst the natives who is willing to follow the path of descent and, so to speak, powerful moderation, and to turn his back, at no small personal risk, on the violent principles in the exertion of which the white communist party had hoped to use him as a lever, is surely nothing less than the stepping-in of Providence at a critical moment." (1)

Providence, she thought, might be assisted by Hertzog's "helpful and active sympathy", which would be best shown by "certain modifications in the Native Bills ... modifications dear to the heart of every native." She also wanted as much obstruction as possible placed in the path of the British mineworkers' leader, A.J. Cook, shortly due in South Africa, so that he could not "get at the natives for such purposes as he intends." Finally an interview with the Prime Minister was sought to apprise him more fully of her work with the I.C.U. (2)

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1. Mrs. E. Lewis to General Hertzog 3rd January, 1927 (B/Wits).
 2. Ibid. Winifred Holtby did not share Mrs. Lewis's fears of Cook, but tactfully agreed that it "might be perilous to have his explosions there." (W. Holtby to Mrs. Lewis 17th January, 1927 - wrongly dated 1928 - B/Wits).

Mrs. Lewis followed this letter up with one the next day to General Smuts, informing him of her action and asking him to impress upon the Prime Minister the importance of her request, should that be necessary. She drew his attention to the change that had come over Kadalie, "giving up gaudy feathers for a sober garb", and his consequent need for unobtrusive support. In a passage that throws as much light upon herself as upon Kadalie, she pointed out how difficult it was to conceal from Kadalie that he was being manipulated.

"If you, Sir, could find strong men friends for the I.C.U. it would be an untold relief for me. For it is an increasingly difficult matter always to make their leader believe that there are influential white men in the country ready to believe in him. It is difficult, too, to keep from him (and from the press) the fact that he has been in any way influenced. To get the best results it is necessary that he should believe himself to have acted from his own free will." (1)

Smuts did nothing except acknowledge her letter. (2)

In the acknowledgment that Mrs. Lewis received from Hertzog through his Private Secretary, the Prime Minister, while promising to give her views "every consideration", was doubtful quite what was expected of him. (3) "Some approving message or kindly notice", answered Mrs. Lewis. (4) Her suggestion was met with a firm, if courteous, refusal. (5)

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1. Mrs. E¹/₂ Lewis to General Smuts 4th January, 1927 (B/Wits).
 2. Note by Mrs. Lewis on the copy of her letter to Smuts.
 3. Private Secretary of the Prime Minister to Mrs. Lewis 18th January, 1927 (B/Wits).
 4. Mrs. E. Lewis to General Hertzog 27th January, 1927 (B/Wits).
 5. Prime Minister's Private Secretary to Mrs. E. Lewis 3rd February, 1927 (B/Wits).

By this time the I.C.U.'s application to the I.F.T.U. had been accepted. This, however, availed it little when it proceeded to take a further step in the direction of forcing the outside world to attend to the wretched conditions endured by black workers in South Africa. At its meeting of December, 1926, the National Council of the Union had come to a decision, overshadowed by the controversy surrounding the expulsion of the Communists, to put forward Kadalie as a candidate for government nomination as a delegate, representing "organised non-European workers", to the next International Labour Conference. An application was sent off to the Secretary for Labour on 19th January, 1927. In due course his Department replied asking such searching questions about the Union and its finances that one wonders whether its purpose was to elicit information or to nonplus the National Secretary. Kadalie remained unperturbed and the information was duly furnished.⁽¹⁾ The application must have been most unwelcome, an additional complication in an already difficult situation. The Government was in rather a predicament because both the South African Trades Union Congress and the Cape Federation of Labour Unions had put forward candidates (one delegate and one adviser) for nomination by the Minister to represent the South African workers at the Conference, and each was refusing to give way to the other or agree to a compromise. At first the Minister of Labour - now Thomas Boydell - decided against sending a delegation at all,⁽²⁾ but then made up his mind to send one that did not

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1. C. Kadalie: Facts for the International Labour Conference (B/Wits). The letters exchanged by the I.C.U. and the Department of Labour are to be found in the Ballinger Collection, University of the Witwatersrand.
 2. Secretary for Labour to Director, I.L.O. 1st April, 1927 (International Labour Office: International Labour Conference 10th Session, Geneva, 1927, Vol. I, p.516-517).

include a workers' delegate or adviser.⁽¹⁾ Unable to agree on a choice of delegates to the Conference, the T.U.C. and the Cape Federation were able to unite in a joint protest to the International Labour Office at Boydell's solution to the problem.⁽²⁾ In the meantime, the I.C.U., thinking that the deadlock between the two white labour organisations strengthened its own case, had grown impatient and sent off a telegram to the Minister on 16th March. It required a second telegram a fortnight later to extract an answer. Predictably the Department rejected the Union's request. The Department of Labour gave as its reason that it could not regard the I.L.O. as "the most representative Industrial Organisation in South Africa". To the I.C.U., however, C.W. Cousins, the Secretary for Labour, gave a different explanation, arguing that the I.C.U. was not "so constituted as to enable the Department to afford it recognition under the Industrial Conciliation Act" and that it did not appear to be "an established industrial organisation in the sense in which such organisations are ordinarily regarded".⁽³⁾

The rejection of the National Secretary's candidature for nomination was one of the topics discussed at the next, the Seventh, Annual Conference, held at Durban that year. This got off to a disappointing start. When he was approached to perform the opening ceremony, the Mayor after first pleading absence from the city, finally declined the invitation on the ground of his disapproval of the preamble to the I.C.U. Constitution. In the end

1. Secretary for Labour to Director, I.L.O. 22nd April, 1927 (Ibid, p.522-23).

2. W.H. Andrews, C.S. Playfair and R. Stuart to Director, I.L.O. (Ibid, p.525-527).

3. Secretary for Labour to Director, I.L.O. 1st April, 1927 (Ibid, p.517).

the Conference was opened by Kadalie.⁽¹⁾

One of the first things the Conference did was to telegraph fraternal greetings to the South African Trades Union Congress, then in session at Cape Town. "We consider", resolved the delegates,

"that the time has arrived for both the white and black workers of South Africa to combine in one national trade union movement, with a view to presenting one united front against a common enemy - namely, the arbitrary and unlimited power of capitalism." (2)

If the I.C.U. leaders thought that the affiliation of their Union to the I.F.T.U. would bring about recognition by and alliance with the white labour movement, they were being excessively optimistic. Although their overtures were not spurned, they were received with great caution. C.F. Glass of the Witwatersrand Tailors' Association moved that the following reply be sent:

"The congress sends fraternal greetings to the annual conference of the I.C.U. and welcomes the gesture of solidarity contained in their telegram. Further, this congress instructs the incoming National Executive Council to arrange a meeting with the I.C.U. executive for the purpose of discussing matters of mutual interest."

While this motion received support from the Communist trade unionists (E. Sachs, B. Weinbren and Fanny Klenerman), it was disliked by most of the other delegates and a compromise cut the motion into two parts, the first part - the reciprocation of fraternal greetings - being accepted, the second part being held over for discussion until after consultation with the Cape

1. "This is the first time," Kadalie erroneously said, "in the history of this organisation that we have been boycotted in the official opening of this Congress." (The Workers' Herald 17th May, 1927).

2. The Workers' Herald 17th May, 1927.

Federation of Labour Unions.⁽¹⁾

Whatever support the I.C.U. received from the white labour movement came from the very members of that movement who were most suspect to the authorities and the general public. It was Glass, later to become Mrs. Lewis's bête noire, who, after the expulsion of La Guma and Khaile, was brought into Head Office to audit the Union's accounts,⁽²⁾ and prepare the financial statement required by the Department of Labour when Kadalie's name was put forward for the International Labour Conference.⁽³⁾ It was not, however, Glass's bookkeeping that attracted unfavourable attention towards the I.C.U., but his oratory. He and W.H. Andrews created a furore in the press and the House of Assembly by their radical speeches at an I.C.U. rally early in April, particularly Andrews, whose speech included a passage that was thought to be especially offensive.

"Build up your organisation, irrespective of prejudice, so as to take possession of this country - I am now speaking to all workers, white, black and coloured - as the Russians have of their country, and as the Chinese are endeavouring to do; and for the first time in history you will be able to enjoy the full fruits of your labour." (4)

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1. Cape Times 18th April, 1927. It is difficult to determine the origin of the belief current in the I.C.U. leadership that the S.A.T.U.C. congress "adopted a resolution calling upon all workers' organisations, irrespective of colour or race, to affiliate to the South African Trade Union Congress". (The Workers' Herald 10th December, 1927). Kadalie's autobiography (p.101) has a curious amalgam of this supposed resolution and the unaccepted part of the Glass motion.
 2. "Before leaving for Europe, I approached officials of the South African Trade Union Congress for assistance ... and their first treasurer was appointed to conduct the auditing in the first place of our books, and at a later stage a book-keeper was appointed by them." (C. Kadalie to Executives and Members of the I.C.U. 13th January, 1929, B/UCT). Glass was both auditor and bookkeeper.
 3. National Secretary to Registrar of Trade Unions and Employers' Organisations, Department of Labour 3rd February, 1927 (B/Wits).
 4. The Star 6th April, 1927.

Andrews could not think what all the fuss was about. As he drily observed, the offending section of his speech was "merely the stereotyped peroration of nine-tenths of Labour and Socialistic speeches heard in this and other countries."⁽¹⁾ It was not, however, what he said that caused alarm, but to whom he said it. Mrs. Lewis, in her anger, wrote a letter to the newspapers, to which F.S. Livie-Noble obligingly put his name, accusing Andrews and Glass of using the I.C.U. for their own nefarious ends. "Thanks to them, the I.C.U. is now largely regarded by the uninformed public as a communistic organisation; whereas, by accredited representatives of Labour organisations with communistic tendencies, the I.C.U. is frankly regarded as a useful foil and pawn in a Political game."⁽²⁾

The Glass-Andrews affair was an unpropitious prelude to the I.C.U.'s Durban Conference. This Conference found, however, the I.C.U., with its expanding membership and rising income and at the start of a new and promising policy, ebullient and confident. The proceedings opened on Good Friday, 15th April, and continued until one o'clock on Thursday, 21st April. Mass meetings on Cartwright's Flats on Good Friday and Easter Monday were an impressive display of the local support enjoyed by the I.C.U.

1. Ibid.

2. Mrs. E. Lewis: A letter to the Press which a member of the Pretoria Joint Council signed his name to and got into the papers recently (B/Wits). It was published in the Cape Times 19th April, 1927. It goes on to give an odd explanation for the renewal of white trade union interest in the I.C.U. - the impending visit to South Africa of A.J. Cook. "It would never do for the apostle of working class freedom to learn that the vast masses of workers had been ignored by the South African disciples of Moscow doctrines." It also mentioned the failure of Andrews to put in a promised appearance at the opening of the I.C.U. library the year before, a lapse of which Mrs. Lewis reminded Kadalie later whenever he felt attracted to the left.

The Conference itself was attended by no fewer than two hundred delegates.⁽¹⁾ J.G. Gumbs presided. In welcoming the delegates Allison Champion launched into a characteristically extravagant attack upon the Mayor, who

"speaks of a revolution. We have never suggested a revolution. It is the mayor's consummate stupidity and colossal cheek that causes him to speak of a revolution. The mayor of Durban is a financier, and if he is afraid of a revolution, then we are going to resort to what he is afraid of. We are not going to please him and bow down to his beck and call because he has now found himself unfit for the position he holds ... We are entitled to enjoy the freedom enjoyed by other people because we have contributed to the building of this town. We did the physical part and the white man the mental part, so that the only just way is to make an equal division of the privileges ... I am here against the doctor's orders, and have been ill for the last five days, but I will sacrifice my life with pleasure to be able to welcome you all here ... presently I shall have to betake myself to my bed again. Thank God I have got a bed and a home, in spite of the mayor of Durban.

"If Champion were to die to-day would that mean the end of the I.C.U.? (Loud cries of: No! No! Not a bit of it!) If Kadalie here dies would the I.C.U. also die or be discouraged in any way? (Loud cries of No! No! But we shall mourn for him.) Our children will learn the doctrine we are expounding now, and they will strive for it, even more strenuously than we do to-day." (2)

He suggested that the Mayor, aided and abetted by the Town Clerk, had tried to "gag the I.C.U." and that the white press had conspired to deny the facilities of the Parsee Rustanjee Hall to the Union "so as to create a bad spirit between the Indians and the Natives."⁽³⁾

1. Or so it was claimed. (The Workers' Herald 17th May, 1927). The largest number of votes cast throughout the conference was seventy-one. It is possible that the supposed number was inflated by the inclusion of people who were not delegates at all. At one point J. Mzazi drew attention to the danger of voting by non-delegates. Another sign of the laxity of the proceedings was the unconstitutional size of the Bloemfontein contingent - thirteen delegates instead of a permitted maximum of four. A complaint was made, but not pursued. (Ibid).

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

In the course of his belligerent speech Champion also touched upon the I.C.U.'s relations with the labour movement in South Africa and abroad. After referring to the affiliation to the International Federation of Trade Unions as "ample proof to show that we were anxious to link up with the workers of the world",⁽¹⁾ he called - somewhat infelicitously - upon the South African Labour Party - "these traitors" - to "throw away their arrogance and link up with the true ideals of labour."⁽²⁾

Champion was followed by President Gumbs. His speech has not survived, but he too subjected the Mayor of Durban to "a grand trouncing".⁽³⁾

On the first full day of business, Saturday 16th April, there was a brief discussion of the Non-European Conference to be held at Kimberley in June of that year, to which the I.C.U. was invited by the African People's Organisation to send a delegation. It was decided to send, as the I.C.U. was "essentially a Trade Union Organisation" and the conveners of the Conference were "recognised as agents of certain political parties", only observers "to watch that those well-known political agents do not use that Conference for their self-interest".⁽⁴⁾ After making this decision, the delegates applied themselves to the main business of the morning, a debate upon the refusal of the Minister of Labour to nominate Clements Kadalie as delegate to the International Labour Conference of 1927. Following upon some preliminary explanation by the

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

National Secretary, C. Doyle Modiakgotla moved that

"Comrade Kadalie be delegated to Geneva to lay before the workers of the Continent the disabilities under which the Non-European workers of this country labour, and further that Comrade Kadalie be authorised to get into touch with certain countries on the continent, as well as Japan, China and India ..." (1)

Speaking to his motion Modiakgotla said that

"his reason for making this provision was that Geneva is in Switzerland, and if Comrade Kadalie attended only at Geneva Conference (sic) he would only come in contact with the Swiss people. But it is imperative that he goes to France, Germany and England for further education on the working-class movement, and also to tell the people of those countries how we suffer here." (2)

In their speeches Mbeki and Maduna stressed the necessity of sending "a full-blooded Native" to Geneva. It was not that the blacks objected to being represented by a white delegate simply because he was white, but - as Maduna put it for the benefit of what he called "our European friends" - because "the white man is selfish, knows nothing about the grievances and sufferings of the Native in this country." In its final form the motion was rather different from Modiakgotla's version.

"That this Congress condemns the partial attitude of the Minister of the Crown, namely, the Minister of Labour, in ignoring the claims of this Organisation, which represents the real workers of this country, to a representative at the forthcoming International Labour Conference at Geneva, and resolves also to ignore the decision of the Minister of Labour and to instruct its National Secretary, Mr. Clements Kadalie, to proceed to Geneva to submit the claims of the Non-European workers who are the victims of merciless exploitation of both capitalism and the white labour policy of the Pact Government, and with this object in view this Congress instructs its National Secretary to carry on an extensive propaganda throughout Europe, if necessary, including the United States of America. Further, this Congress instructs the National Council to make all necessary arrangements to ensure the departure of its delegate at an early date." (3)

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

During the course of the debate on Geneva, on the Saturday afternoon, there intervened the curious episode of S.M. Pettersen, a local socialist and organiser of the racially mixed Seamen's Union,⁽¹⁾ who was on good terms with Champion and had thrown whatever influence he had in the docks and elsewhere upon the side of the I.C.U. Pettersen, who was neither reticent nor backward, wanted to be accepted by the Conference as a fraternal delegate from the Durban dockworkers, and his request was supported, in the absence of Champion through illness, by Clements Kadalie and J. Mzazi of East London. Considerable opposition was aroused, expressed most vigorously by Keable 'Mote, who seems to have deserted the ranks of the radical Ginger Group (which was vocal during this Conference as during the last), without, however, becoming less mercurial. There is some doubt whether hostility to Pettersen arose because he was white, or because, in spite of his denials, he was thought to be a Communist, or because he was thought to be intrusive, or because the delegates did not much care for him personally. Mzazi suggested that the objections were lacking in consistency, seeing that the Conference had committed itself to an outward-looking policy by expressing earlier its solidarity with the people of China, by appointing the National Secretary to put the case of the black workers to the white workers of Europe and by dispatching fraternal greetings to the white workers meeting in Cape Town. It seems, however, that 'Mote and those who thought like him did not object to Pettersen because he was a white man and an outsider, or even because of the ideology to which he was thought to subscribe, but because

1. Subsequently a Nationalist senator.

of the party to which he was thought to belong. There can be little doubt that there was a strong feeling among the delegates against the Communist Party, not because of its aims, but because of its methods, suspected as it was of trying to manipulate the Union in the pursuance of interests that were not directly its own. 'Mote also objected to expressions of support for the "Hands-off-China" Committee, not because he was a sinophobe, but because "the Chinese were all Communists".⁽¹⁾ It was this very same Conference that welcomed A.F. Batty, the "Father of the I.C.U.", as white and as alien as Pettersen, but one whose rôle in the Union in its earliest days had been by no means domineering

'Mote, so Tyamzashe reported in The Workers' Herald,⁽²⁾ was trounced by the National Secretary "in such a manner that he looked like a naughty boy", but Kadalie's motion to accept Pettersen as a fraternal delegate was still rejected by a majority of one - 36 to 35. Pettersen, somewhat ungracefully and ungraciously for a would-be guest, demanded without success a re-count.⁽³⁾

Immediately afterwards, in a debate on the Government's four "Native and Coloured Bills", Kadalie, who had supported Pettersen and must therefore be reckoned an "albophil" if the intruder was ejected on racial grounds, hotly attacked the white race. "Whenever he discussed the Native question", he said,

"his blood boiled. It was at such times that he was accused of racialism. But when one considered that the

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. The debate on Pettersen took place on Saturday afternoon. When the Conference reopened at 10.30 on Monday morning Kadalie "read a letter from the Trade Union Congress complaining about the refusal of Congress to allow Mr. Pætersen (sic) as a fraternal delegate." (Ibid). A letter could not have arrived so quickly.

"white people came to this country uninvited, and yet they now had the audacity to dictate, one will find his attitude was a natural justification. There is no compromise on this question, because the white man has proved himself to be a first-class humbug. He came with a Bible which he does not respect, and he now expects us to respect that same Bible, while he gambles away our rights and freedom, to say nothing of our land. He says the black man must develop on his own lines, and this is believed by many of our people, who pray too much and work too little. It is further suggested that the present iniquitous laws are made to save white civilisation ... When our present rulers copied their civilisation from the Romans, the latter did not tell them to develop along their own lines, they might still have been the cannibals they were in the 4th century A.D. ..." (1)

He concluded by advocating a one-day protest strike should the Bills become law. (2)

The Ginger Group wanted stronger action. A counter motion was moved by Mbeki (3) and supported by Maduna. "Are you going back to the masses and ask them to pray, or will you go back and tell them to depend on their numerical powers?" asked by Mbeki. Resuming the debate on Easter Monday, he made a fiery speech that won loud applause.

"There can be no doubt that the general strike weapon makes delegates tremble but there was no alternative if they wanted their freedom. At this juncture there is no alternative but to take drastic action. If we want to achieve freedom in South Africa we must go through flames of fire. The masses in the field are looking towards this Congress for something tangible. Those of you who have

1. Ibid.

2. E. Roux: Time Longer than Rope, p.170 (echoed by S.W. Johns: Trade union, political pressure group, or mass movement?, p.729, which gives no reference) has it that Kadalie favoured a day of prayer. It appears, however, Professor Roux relied upon the account given in The Workers' Herald of 17th May, 1927, where the report of Kadalie's speech ends: "If I had my own way I would advocate a day's strike in protest of (sic) these inhuman measures". It was Mbeki that spoke of prayer, not Kadalie.

3. All was forgiven as far as Mbeki the ex-Communist was concerned. "Little Comrade Thomas Mbeki ... was the hero of the Congress", reported H.D. Tyamzashe "Calm in his debates, of small stature and young in years, he swayed the house with his clear sten-torian voice." (Ibid).

read the Government's four Bills can see that they are out to reduce the Native workers to a position of absolute serfdom ... and it is high time you should show your teeth. They speak of Native Councils that will consider Native affairs and grievances, but I tell you that all your grievances will be relegated to that cackling shop of witch-doctors and barbarians - the Pretoria Annual Native Conference - many of whom are 'Good boys', and paid agents of the Government." (1)

In his speech of support Maduna, who had presumably not long before voted with the rest of the Conference in favour of sending Kadalie to Geneva, now, without apparently being aware that he was doing so, threw into doubt the value of the policy of seeking help from outside the country.

"As far as he could remember, former organisations had made appeals to the Union and Imperial Governments. Deputations had also been sent to Europe at the expense of the poorest people of this country, but all these endeavours and other diplomatic 'paraphernalia' proved futile ... Something drastic has to be done. If we have to die to benefit those who come after us, he (Maduna) was ready.(2) Some will call this revolutionary talk, but what sane or self-respecting man could endure the indignation, wickedness and humbug?" (3)

When Kadalie rose to repeat his support for a day of protest, some of the delegates remonstrated with him: "No, no, no, that is too mild, chief." (4) Apparently nettled, the

1. Ibid.

2. In 1930 Kadalie and other I.C.U. leaders, including Maduna, were arrested in East London during a strike. "On the day of our arrival at Grahamstown, Will Stuart came to the gaol ... He told us that bail would be considerably reduced, but that he had some fear in regard to Alexander Maduna ... who had a previous bad police record at Maritzburg, Natal. When Maduna was told of this by Stuart, he broke into tears. We had a big job to pacify him." (C. Kadalie: My Life and the I.C.U., p.194-195).

3. The Workers' Herald 17th May, 1927.

4. Ibid.

National Secretary went on,

"All right, if you want to lead a bloody revolution I am going to follow you, but, mark you, if I do follow you, I am going the whole hog. I am not a religious fanatic, as I ceased to pray in 1910 and will not pray again until we are a free people by fair means or by foul means." (1)

Nevertheless, though he suggested that "instead of prayer, let us have a militant day". Whatever he meant by that, he was unwilling to go further and accused the Ginger Group of "juggling with high-sounding and empty phraseology." (2)

When the Conference divided, fifty votes were cast for Kadalie's motion, seventeen for Mbeki's. Those who spoke against extreme measures regarded them as braggadocio. "I know that the very people who speak so loud now about a strike", said H.K. Binda of Kroonstad, "will creep under their grandmothers' beds when the thing comes to a head." (3) A.J. Phoofolo, the Johannesburg Branch Secretary, thought that some of the Ginger Group were "imbued with a communistic spirit", (4) though in fact Maduna was the one who had introduced the motion at the National Council meeting of December, 1926, to expel the Communists, while the ex-Communist de Norman, who later in the proceedings challenged that decision of the National Council, supported the National Secretary's motion. (5)

On Easter Monday also there was the usual debate on the iniquity of the pass laws, a staple of I.C.U. conferences. That

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

year Kadalie attacked them on novel grounds; the revenue from passes was used, he supposed, largely for the support of the country's universities. He suggested a "strong deputation" to the Government, followed, in the inevitable absence of relief, by a challenge in the law courts.

"I say that the pass laws interfere with a man's liberty, and if any man interferes with Kadalie's liberty he will meet opposition, because I am not a slave. But, for goodness sake, let us convince the white man and everybody else that we are not out for disruption and disturbance, but that we are out for freedom, and will exhaust all constitutional means to attain that end. Let us test whether there is such a thing as civilised justice, and let us test whether there is any necessity for such pernicious laws for civilised men and women. Let South Africa write a new history and show the civilised world that we are prepared to take this matter even to the House of Lords. If we fail to draw sympathy and redress from all these channels then, and then only, should other means be resorted to. We shall then tell Tielman Roos that we have done everything to make him realise the injustice of his laws, and if he does not want to listen to our cry of suffering, then he can put all his bad laws into his pocket, because we are not going to look at them. Why, even Jesus would not have observed these laws, and He would not blame us for breaking them. Let the whole of us shed our tears upon him and tell him that we are not going to have this any longer." (1)

C. Doyle Modiakgotla, who seconded the National Secretary's motion, but did not share his view upon the avenue for escape, wanted defiance not a test case.

"Instead of wasting money, the Natives should simply chuck away these dirty papers and walk about South Africa in the same manner as the white foreigner does. We have lady delegates present in this hall who put that spirit into practice at Bloemfontein not many years ago. Let the white man keep his papers for himself, his wife and his children if he likes. The money they intended to give to the lawyers and law courts could be given to their wives and children while they went to gaol." (2)

The speakers argued that, whatever their original justification as a means of identification and a check upon vagrancy, they were

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

discriminatory, "a badge of slavery and humiliation" (Maduna), and a source of revenue that was disproportionately shared. Were I.C.U. officials not sufficiently well-known not to require a pass? Were there no white robbers and vagrants? Was not the African "morally and intellectually superior to the white man" (Maduna)? At the end of the debate a somewhat stiffer counter-motion of de Norman was passed in preference to Kadalie's original motion, indicative of the peculiar abhorrence which was felt for the pass laws. The resolution adopted instructed "the National Council to appoint a deputation to interview the Government and demand the immediate abolition of all pass laws, and if no satisfactory reply be received to organise a Passive Resistance Movement throughout the Union".⁽¹⁾

The Conference, after an interval given up to a contemptuous discussion of Bennett Ncwana, who had appeared in Durban and written a long letter in The Natal Advertiser denigrating the I.C.U., turned from the pass laws to give its attention to the arbitrary dismissal of black workers by the railways to make way for whites. It condemned in particular the practice of dismissing Africans on reaching the age of sixty. A resolution was passed calling upon the Government to "stop this iniquitous policy and to employ their labour on the sound principles of economic value and physical and mental fitness for the work, irrespective of race or colour".⁽²⁾

1. The deputation, it was elsewhere decided, should also request the Government to appoint a commission "to enquire into the position of the Native workers of South Africa as recommended by the Wage and Economic Commission". (Ibid).

2. Ibid.

The main business of the morning of Tuesday 19th April was a debate upon the position of Communists within the organisation. A recommendation by the National Council that "ordinary members of the organisation be not allowed to identify themselves in any way with the Communist Party" was passed overwhelmingly.⁽¹⁾ Kadalie opened the discussion with a predictable attack upon the Communists. "In all countries," he said

"the Communists have been banned as cut-throats and anarchist who have no intelligent policy - except murder - to place before the workers.

"The Native family in Africa was a communistic entity. The difference, however, between the Native and European Communists was that the latter preached a doctrine of murder, and incited subject races like the Natives to act unconstitutionally, while the former preached a doctrine of friendship to all ... In the instance of my ban, what did these communist persons do? They did not even contribute a single penny. All they did was to foster a spirit of hostile action towards peace and goodwill in this country ..."

He was echoed by Maduna of the Ginger Group and by Elias, who, if not a "Gingerist", had certainly shown himself to be on the militant wing of the I.C.U. The former dwelt upon the interference by the Communist Party in the Union's internal affairs. De Norman, on the other hand, spoke against the National Council recommendation, pointing out that the National Secretary had been responsible in the first place for the penetration of the I.C.U. by the Communists, and claiming freedom of political affiliation for members. An acrimonious exchange followed, with Champion calling upon de Norman to "speak out like a man" and say whether he was a member of the Communist Party, while Maduna, who

1. The report, by H.D. Tyamzashe, that "only five of the two hundred delegates" voted against the motion is not conclusive evidence that there were really two hundred present. Tyamzashe only counted the nays and had good reason for wanting to exaggerate the size of the victory. (Ibid).

2. Ibid.

questioned his version of the reason for the summoning of the National Council at Port Elizabeth, said that de Norman seemed to be "devoid of truthfulness". The discussion was brought to a close by A.J. Phoofolo.

"I would put to this house the horrors of the communists at Johannesburg. There these renegades and scums of iniquity (sic) do not care what they did as long as they can link up their Native dupes with any sort of unconstitutional movement. I know that some of their members endeavoured to do our officials harm." (1)

Incongruously the next speaker, Thomas Mbeki, moving the observance by the I.C.U. of May Day, "the Holy Day of the workers of the world", came out in support of the very policy for which the Communists had been condemned.

"As I said yesterday, iniquities like the pass laws could not be killed by lip eloquence. The freedom of the workers of this country will be gained in the same manner as the workers of other countries did. If other workers were freed by revolution they in South Africa must also adopt that course." (2)

On Tuesday afternoon the last major debate of the Conference took place, on the minimum wage question. Over a year of Pact government had not diminished the trust placed in the Wage Act. If, Kadalie said,

"the Pact Government had done any good thing for the workers it was the institution of this Wage Board. The cry had always been that the Natives were a danger to the white workers on account of the cheap labour of the former. That matter has now been remedied by the existence of the Wage Board. For that reason it would be quite in keeping if this Congress instructed all Provincial Secretaries to stand out and demand a rise in wages in their different centres." (3)

There ensued a desultory discussion, with the Conference uncertain whether it was a topic suitable for debate or best left in the

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

hands of the National Council. Random facts about wages were mentioned and suggestions of what constituted a fair minimum wage. A Pietermaritzburg delegate was in favour of 6s. a day for urban workers and 3s.4d. for rural workers, but the figure decided upon for the final resolution was 8s. With Justice Kadalie pointed out that "they discussed this question each year, but they got no further", and gave his support to making full use of the Act and appealing to the Government to include agricultural labourers within the scope of that Act.⁽¹⁾ De Norman, who concurred, thought that such an appeal would meet with a sympathetic response from the Government, especially Madeley, who had recently insisted upon an eight shilling minimum daily wage for unskilled labourers in the building industry, irrespective of race, not in order to drive blacks out of employment, but to secure for them an adequate wage.

The remaining business was short. On Tuesday afternoon the only item on the agenda was the Native Administration Bill. The Conference passed a resolution condemning it ("anti-British and an unjust interference with free speech and the liberty of the subject ... this retrograde undemocratic and criminal manufacturing measure") but there was no discussion. The Conference then met again briefly in public session on Wednesday morning before going "into committee" for a discussion of "internal affairs". (It was on Wednesday morning that A.F. Batty was introduced to the delegates as the "Father of the I.C.U.>"). By then many delegates

1. The resolution adopted also mentioned domestic servants. (Ibid).

seem to have left already, because there were only 46 votes cast in the last division of the Conference. A motion to give moral support to the non-European tailors then on strike in Durban was narrowly defeated (24 to 22). The short discussion that took place is instructive. The motion was introduced by de Norman, an Indian, and seconded by Booisen of Cape Town, Coloured. Presumably the strikers were themselves Indian and Coloured. Opposition came from Champion on the ground that the men were not members of the Union and had in fact resisted I.C.U. attempts at organisation, showing that the I.C.U. in Durban was very much a Zulu movement. That there may have been racial implications is supported by what was said by Modiakgotla, who remarked upon the folly of denying sympathy to local workers, union members or not, a day or two after expressing it towards the workers of China. Kadalie, who thought that it was their duty "to sympathise with these men, whether they were members of the union or not, so long as they were not scabs,"⁽¹⁾ was unable to sway the opposition.

Three weeks after the Durban Conference ended on 13th May, 1927, Kadalie set sail for Europe from Cape Town in the Windsor Castle, after some difficulty in booking a passage.⁽²⁾ The

1. Ibid.

2. Kadalie's own account of the episode reads almost like a parody of his style. "In Johannesburg I was suffering from slight pneumonia, but with determination I decided to proceed to Cape Town where I was well known by the two managing directors of the Union Castle Company. Accompanied by my private secretary, who at the time was Abe J. Phoofolo, I entrained for Cape Town. On arrival at our office, I immediately put through a telephone call to one of the directors of the Union Castle Company. I was offered first-class accommodation in the R.M.S. Windsor Castle. Thus on May 13th, 1927, at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, I sailed from Cape Town docks as a 'missionary in reverse', with a new mission to Europe. I went aboard recuperating from my illness, and on the first day aboard the Windsor Castle my health had greatly improved." (Ibid, p.103-104).

voyage was not a happy one, since he was ostracised by most of his fellow passengers and ignored - with one exception - by the rest, but a short stay at Madeira revealed a world un-preoccupied with colour.⁽¹⁾ In London he was welcomed by Winifred Holtby, who took him to the headquarters of the Independent Labour Party, where he met Fenner Brockway, the political secretary of the I.L.P. The following day he left for Geneva.

Clements Kadalie spent two weeks in Geneva, returning to London on 16th June.⁽²⁾ Of the official South African delegates - B.J. Pienaar, M.L.A. and H.W. Sampson, M.L.A. (representing the Government), J. Collie, Secretary of the Royal Commission on Social Insurance, and W. Freestone, Divisional Inspector, Department of Labour, (advisers), and J.S. Hancock of the Transvaal Chamber of Industry (representing employers) - two were friendly, Freestone and Hancock,⁽³⁾ and on the whole the Conference gave him a sympathetic reception.⁽⁴⁾ The National Secretary issued a memorandum stating the claims of his union to choose a delegate, viz. its affiliation to the I.F.T.U. (unique in South Africa); its large membership, larger than that of the S.A.T.U.C. and the Cape Federation put together; the wide occupational range of those members; and its racial catholicity and tolerance.⁽⁵⁾

1. Ibid, p.105-106.

2. His autobiography has two weeks on p.109, three on p.110 and three on p.114.

3. C. Kadalie to E. Lewis 13th June, 1927 (B/Wits); W. Holtby to E. Lewis 3rd July, 1927; The Workers' Herald 15th September, 1927.

4. It appears, by Kadalie's own rather obscure admission, that not everyone took his part against the official delegates. "To some extent, the propaganda affected the British delegates, who were of the older school." (The Workers' Herald 15th September, 1927).

5. C. Kadalie: Facts for the International Labour Conference (B/Wits); C. Kadalie: My Life and the I.C.U., p.111-113.

Although he addressed the Workers' Group and appeared in the photographs taken of both that group and the delegation from the British Empire, he did not participate in the official proceedings.⁽¹⁾ The Credentials Committee of the Conference declined to set foot in the minefield of South African race relations. Dismissing the I.C.U.'s protest at the refusal of the South African Government to nominate its National Secretary, the Committee preferred to take note of the complaint of the white unions that the Government had failed to appoint a workers' delegate at all. In the Conference's discussion of the report submitted by the Committee Corneille Mertens, General Secretary of the Belgian Trade Union Committee and the Belgian workers' delegate, objected to the neglect of the I.C.U. complaint. When the reporter of the Credentials Committee, George Tchourtchine, the employers' delegate from the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, upheld the contention of the South African Government that the I.C.U. complaint could not be considered because the Union was not registered Mertens objected still more, because his own Trade Union Committee was not registered under Belgian law and, therefore, he saw the possible creation of a dangerous precedent. Tchourtchine then shifted his ground somewhat, from one technical point to another:

"Il me semble qu'il convient tout de même d'être en conformite avec les lois de son pays, même lorsqu'il s'agit de la forme. D'autre part, la plainte de M.

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1. "The South African delegates, with the exception of William Freestone and ... Hannick (sic), demanded that I should be cut out, giving as their excuse the fact that I was not officially a delegate. However, as there were six other unofficial delegates in the photograph, it was quite obvious that their reason for demanding my exclusion was on the grounds of race." (C. Kadakie: My Life, p.110).

3. No copy of

Kadakie's...

"Kadalie concerne la nomination d'un délégué blanc. Puisque le délégué blanc n'a pas été nommé, il n'y a pas, au fond, de protestation." (1)

Mertens demanded a vote on the report, which, however, on a show of hands, was accepted by the delegates, thus bringing to a close all the official notice taken of the I.C.U.

With the assistance of Harold Grimshaw, the head of the Colonial Division of the International Labour Office, who took him under his wing, Kadalie drew up a letter of protest to the Director. Pointing out that the South African T.U.C. and the Cape Federation were also unregistered, because the requirements of the Industrial Conciliation Act made registration as impossible for them as for the I.C.U., he complained that their protest had been considered by the Credentials Committee and printed among the official documents of the Conference. A request was made that the I.C.U.'s case be reconsidered by the Committee and its protest included in the official record. Kadalie concluded,

"I should be glad further to be assured that the decision of the Credentials Committee was not based on racial considerations, which would be contrary to the general principles contained in Article 427 of the Treaty of Versailles and to the principle of the sacred trust embodied in Article 22 of the Covenant." (2)

There is nothing to show that the case was reopened. (3)

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1. International Labour Office: Op.cit., p.261. Kadalie suspected a South African Government plot. "The Conference was taken by surprise as there was nobody prepared for the debate. It was a prearrangement and I gather on good authority that the South African Government used all its influence to see that the case of the I.C.U. on behalf of the toiling masses of South Africa does not come before Conference." (C. Kadalie to W. Holtby 11th June, 1927, B/UCT).
 2. C. Kadalie to Secretary-General of the International Labour Conference (alias the Director of the I.L.C.) 11th June, 1927 (F 1927/18; WH).
 3. No copy of the Director's reply has survived in any of the Kadalie/I.C.U. manuscript collections.

On 13th June the Indian workers' delegate, V.V. Giri, moved a resolution that the Conference should draw the attention of countries "in which the white people are the ruling class, but in which the natives and the coloured people are either the majority of the population of that country or form a substantial portion of the population, to the desirability of the representatives of the native and coloured workers attending the International Labour Conference as part of the delegation from those countries."⁽¹⁾ He cited the case of South Africa. Pienaar of the South African delegation spoke to the resolution in a surprising way.

Perhaps merely a typical example of S.A. legislation when convenient

"I wish to point out ... that the mode of representation is laid down, I believe, in the Treaty of Versailles. It has nothing to do with the proportion of races. The method laid down in the Treaty has always been followed in South Africa. If the coloured, or other workers are not sufficiently represented, they have only themselves to blame. We can only follow the law as laid down in the Treaty of Versailles, and that we have done." ⁽²⁾

Grimshaw drew from this statement the conclusion that, should black unions become strong enough, the South African Government would not be able to overlook them in nominating the workers' delegate.⁽³⁾ The question, however, never arose.

On the eve of Kadalie's departure from Geneva Grimshaw summed up the effects of his appearance there.

"As to the more general aspect of Kadalie's visit, I should say in the first place that it has aroused very widespread interest. He has been well received, particularly, of course, by the Workers' Group, and has undoubtedly made a favourable impression and secured a personal success. I

1. I.L.O.: Op.cit., p.336.

2. Ibid, p.336.

3. H. Grimshaw to F. Brockway 15th June, 1927 (B/Wits)†

"have heard very favourable comments on the modesty and moderation of his proposals and procedure, and this in spite of the fact that an attempt was made to prejudice his case and to discredit him personally. (1) In sum, he has prepared the way for a very favourable reception of representatives of black workers, who will undoubtedly be present at future conferences, and for a favourable hearing of their demands.

"From my own point of view (as responsible for the work being done on Native and colonial matters) his visit has been very valuable. He has, so to speak, 'dramatised' my work, and has given reality to the question of the representation of native workers, always so far a more or less theoretical one, though one, juridically speaking, easily realisable." (2) (5)

The favourable impression created by Kadalie at Geneva drove the Department of Labour to a realisation that the Government had to come to terms with the black industrial movement in order, if for no other reason, to meet criticism from overseas, where, as Thomas Boydell expressed it with some understatement, "a viewpoint different to that in this country is more and more gaining ground". (3) First news from Geneva came from Freestone, who, in a letter to the Secretary for Labour, C.W. Cousins, described the effect Kadalie's appearance had had there and the embarrassment it had apparently caused the Director and Deputy Director of the

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1. The South African delegates, according to Kadalie, claimed that the I.C.U. had only six thousand members and that Kadalie was not a British subject, but came from the Belgian Congo. (C. Kadalie to E. Lewis 13th June, 1927). "I was strongly tempted ... to launch out a counter outburst against their insidious propaganda, but your advice overwhelmed me at the moment (sic). I exercised the qualities of a statesman, and eventually I won against the forces of reaction." (C. Kadalie to E. Lewis 21st June, 1927). An interesting Freudian error occurs in the same letter: "When perplexing questions confront me, I have looked for refuge from your advice." Subconsciously, perhaps, realising the truth of this statement, Mrs. Lewis crossed out 'from' and substituted 'to'.
 2. For a different view of the impression made by Kadalie at Geneva, cf. W. Ballinger: Winifred Holtby and Africa (B/UCT) and V. Brittain: Testament of Friendship, p.203.
 3. Central Archives: Department of Labour 4002/1103 Part 2 T. Boydell to C.W. Cousins 17th July, 1927.

I.L.O., Albert Thomas and Harold Butler.

"The event of the week so far as South Africa is concerned is the arrival of Clements Kadalie. His appearance created a mild sensation chiefly on account of the shiny blackness of his skin. Socially I hear he has proved to be successful, many of the delegates from European countries and their women folk finding him very interesting and appealing. The notion that we are deliberately refusing to dispense even-handed justice appears to have considerable sway here and our explanations are not all satisfying the ideas and minds of the average European whose knowledge of the Native has been gleaned from Missionary reports and sermons along with an occasional interview with solitary Natives.

"Since his arrival here Kadalie has interviewed M. Thomas and Mr. Butler as well as other officers and members of the Governing Body. They appear to find him a difficult subject and scarcely know what to do with him, or about him. On Friday he turned up (without invitation) at a reception given by Mrs. Butler to a number of members of the League of Nations Union, and of course was immediately seized upon by the female portion of the visitors who appeared to greedily swallow all the stuff he was willing to supply. Mrs. Butler was most unhappy about it. (1)

"Kadalie has also issued a statement setting out the I.C.U. position up to date and deducing several much exaggerated conclusions ... I understand the Credentials Committee are not taking any action in the matter, but I rather think our Government will be asked for their comments on the position by the Office." (2)

Cousins commented:

"I feel quite sure that the Government has not appreciated yet the importance of setting in motion an authoritative

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1. There is somewhat oblique confirmation of the perplexity felt by Butler. Mrs. Palmer, who organised his meetings in Durban during his visit to South Africa in 1928, wrote to Mrs. Lewis: "I admired Butler v. much, he said so little & elicited so much. It was amusing too to watch the effect on respectable Durban citizens when he or his wife talked of Kadalie as an interesting (tho' rather dangerous) person whom one might meet. I was at a ladies' lunch when Mrs. Butler mentioned his having come to one of her parties in Geneva. Gasps of dismayed astonishment!" (2nd February, 1928, B/UCT).
 2. Central Archives: Department of Labour 4002/1103 Part 2
C.W. Cousins to T. Boydell 30th June, 1927.

exposition of its attitude to the Native population and its system of Native administration." (1)

It seems add that eighteen months after Hertzog's Smithfield speech and a year after the publication of the "Native Bills" the Secretary for Labour should still require "an authoritative exposition" of the Government's "attitude to the Native population and its system of Native administration". How the Nationalist wing of the Pact Government viewed the position of the black population in the country was made all too clear in the Native Administration Bill then before Parliament. For Hertzog and Roos that Bill was to serve a dual purpose. On the one hand, replacing the Sedition Bill which had been withdrawn in deference to Labour susceptibilities, it permitted control of black agitators without trespassing upon the rights of white trade unionists; on the other, it "re-established and resurrected the diminishing tribalism among Africans"⁽²⁾ with a view to making sure that the Nationalist concept of two irreconcilable cultures, a superior and an inferior, remained correct. Kadalie was well aware of what the Nationalists were up to.

"The present Government ... desires the Native population of South Africa to return to their old state of barbarism, and the advances they are now making, economically, politically and socially are annoying the Government extremely. What they desire is that the natives shall be controlled by native chiefs, a manifest absurdity in these days of democracy." (3)

1. Ibid.

2. C.M. Tatz: Op.cit., p.43.

3. C. Kadalie to W. Holtby 8th September, 1927 (B/UOT).

The Bill proposed to give the Government extremely wide powers, enabling it to restrict severely the movement and gathering of Africans⁽¹⁾ and to banish from any named locality those guilty of offences that were left to the executive to define.⁽²⁾ Its most notorious clause, Clause 26 (which applied to whites as well as to blacks) empowered "the Governor-General to make regulations to prohibit the dissemination by any person of doctrines subversive of peace and good order among the Natives of the Union. The acts which may be prohibited by such regulations shall include those done with an intention ... to promote feelings of hostility between different races in the Union."⁽³⁾ In a letter of protest to the Secretary for Native Affairs, Major J.F. Herbst, the Secretary of the I.F.T.U. (requested to intervene by a telegram from the I.C.U.⁽⁴⁾) describes these clauses as "extremely vague and capable of admitting of an interpretation which would be highly prejudicial to trade union activities."⁽⁵⁾ It was not, however, only the I.C.U. that was unhappy about the so-called sedition clauses of the Bill. The Labour Party and the S.A.T.U.C., too, egged on from the left, raised objections,⁽⁶⁾ particularly

1. Chapter VII, 24 and 25.

2. Chapter II, 4 (c).

3. Chapter VII, 26 (1) and (2).

4. Secretary for Native Affairs to Secretary of the I.F.T.U. 4th May, 1927 (B/Wits).

5. Secretary of the I.F.T.U. to Secretary for Native Affairs 28th June, 1927 (B/Wits).

6. Objections also came from Advocate Alexander, who regarded the I.C.U. as a legitimate trade union and who evidently sympathised with its argument against the Bill, viz. that it was aimed at only one section of the population and at wrecking the Union. He thought existing law was quite adequate for dealing with sedition. (Union of South Africa: Debates of the House of Assembly, 1927, Col.2945-2948). Barlow again went to Kadalie's defence. (Ibid, Col.2999-3001). General Smuts, while being in favour of a comprehensive sedition law to apply to all, opposed Clause 26 on the ground that it was wrong to have "a separate system of crimes established for natives." (Ibid, Col.2919).

with respect to Clause 26, with the result that the Prime Minister was compelled to agree to a Select Committee (which, to the indignation of the I.C.U.,⁽¹⁾ did not take evidence) and the withdrawal of the offending clause. The other objectionable clauses, however, remained and part of Clause 26 itself slipped back in as Clause 29 (1), the "hostility clause" -

"Any person who utters any words or does any other act or thing whatever with intent to promote any feeling of hostility between Natives and Europeans shall be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to imprisonment for a period not exceeding one year or to a fine of £100, or both."

Furthermore, a new clause, presumably aimed at Kadalie and 'Mote, was introduced, which provided for the deportation of any African born outside the Union of South Africa should he be convicted of any offence under Clause 29 (1).

In July the Bill became law. The white labour movement of South Africa might have eased its conscience, but the Act, in its final form, remained extremely ominous for black trade unionism. Since the I.C.U. had the ear of the international labour movement, its point of view was the one that was propagated in Europe. The published comment of the International Federation of Trade Unions upon the Act was clearly based upon information supplied by Kadalie:⁽²⁾

"The South African Government has ... afforded a splendid example of how to promote race hatred ... It is evidently the desire of the South African Government that the starving black workers be compelled to renounce their human rights and surrender like animals to the vindictive farmers, thereby re-introducing slavery in South Africa." (3)

1. The Workers' Herald 17th May, 1927.

2. Cf. circular letter from Clements Kadalie, undated, but written in England, headed "Martial Law in South Africa". (B/UCT).

3. Report No. 32 of the I.F.T.U., Amsterdam 8th September, 1927, quoted in Central Archives: Department of Labour 4002/1103/1 Secretary for Labour to Secretary for Native Affairs 19th October, 1927.

Confronted with criticism from abroad, the Secretary for Native Affairs took up the position that the Native Administration Act had nothing to do with trade unionism. "It is, of course, the case," he wrote to the Secretary of the I.F.T.U.,

"that certain clauses of the Act could be interpreted as to make illegal activities regarded by trade unionists as essential. This of course can be argued in respect of any legislation with restrictive provisions such as are necessary in the control of uncivilised or semi-barbarous peoples. (1)

"The Native Administration Act, as its name implies, was drawn up solely to facilitate Native Administration, and without reference to any economic interest." (2)

Later Herbst, pressed by the Department of Labour for "a clear and concise statement of the native position ... in order to rebut misrepresentations", (3) denied that his department was hostile to African trade unionism. The Act was directed, he said, not against "trade unionism amongst the native population, to which the Government of the Union is not opposed, so long as it is confined to legitimate and proper channels", but against "unscrupulous and fanatical agitators, who, for their own ends or profit, do not hesitate to promote racial strife and promote doctrines subversive of all order and good government, heedless of the consequences to their misguided followers." (4) Among such "unscrupulous and fanatical agitators" Herbst reckoned Kadalie

1. Kadalie naturally found this particularly offensive. He argued that the Act applied as much to the "industrialised and detribalised" Africans as to the rest and that black industrial workers were as entitled as white workers to form trade unions untrammelled by such provisions as those contained in the Native Administration Act. (C. Kadalie to Secretary, I.F.T.U. 9th September, 1927, B/UCT and F 1927/55). He also pointed out that the Act infringed the political rights granted to Cape Africans by the Act of Union. (Ibid).

2. Secretary for Native Affairs to Secretary, I.F.T.U. 25th July, 1927 (B/Wits).

3. Secretary for Labour to Secretary for Native Affairs 19th October, 1927.

4. Secretary for Native Affairs to Secretary for Labour 26th N.A. October, 1927.

and Mbeki and he certainly did not consider that the I.C.U. was a trade union "confined to legitimate and proper channels".

"There is only one organised body purporting to represent native workers in the Union, namely, a body styling itself 'The Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of South Africa (sic)', and unfortunately the Government's experience of its management and activities has not been such as to justify official recognition of this so-called Union.

"Speeches made by leaders of this movement have on numerous occasions been intemperate, ill-advised, disloyal and remarkable for their inflammatory character ...

"Apart from any other consideration the Government is not satisfied that the finances of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of South Africa ... are properly accounted for or administered. No annual report containing a satisfactory statement is issued by this body ..." (1)

It is plain that the views of the Labour and Native Affairs Departments were at variance. Two and a half months before Major Herbst's diatribe against the I.C.U. the Secretary for Labour wrote to his colleague of the Native Affairs Department stressing the need, in view of the prestige that Kadalie had acquired at Geneva in the eyes of South African blacks and in view of the impending visit to South Africa, at the invitation of the Government, of the Deputy Director of the International Labour Office, to formulate a policy on the question of "Native industrial organisation" in order, "if possible, to guide and direct the movement into channels in which reasonable action can be assured and friction and trouble be averted". It was essential, he went on, that Butler should secure a "proper comprehension of the difficulties of Native Administration in South Africa" because, whatever he reported would be "distributed to the Governments and all Industrial Organisations throughout the world". "Mr. Butler

1. Ibid. It is strange that one government department in a minute to another should refer to its own views as those of the Government.

Save that Major Herbst was not really referring to the N.A.D.'s views so much as those of the Govt. communicated by the Minister of Native Affairs & based upon reports to the Minister of Labour by the Dept. of Labour (as with all other matters) itself. all would be the same?

himself", continued the Secretary for Labour in a passage that suggests the incompatibility of justice and common sense,

"is a man of outstanding ability and, while compelled naturally to take a stand on the abstract principles of justice, upon which the International Labour Organisation is founded, will undoubtedly be able to approach the matter in a perfectly reasonable manner and may possibly be able to impart some comprehension of the attitude of other nations towards the South African problem of Native Administration."

He concluded by suggesting an inter-departmental consultation.⁽¹⁾

At the beginning of September Cousins drew up a memorandum for the benefit of his minister setting out in very guarded terms the trend of policy, as he saw it, of the Department of Labour in its dealings with the African in industry in general and the African labour movement in particular. To him, looking back to the establishment of the Department in July, 1924, the pressing problem which it had been set up to deal with had seemed simplicity itself: "turning the tide which had set adversely to the employment of white labour in the opposite direction."⁽²⁾ The primary function of the new Department had been "to use all the opportunities afforded by legislation and by administrative methods to further the interests of the white population and to widen the opportunities for white labour in the Union."⁽³⁾ While it had been recognised that, for all practical purposes, part of the Coloured population was indistinguishable from the white

1. Central Archives: Department of Labour 4002/1103 Pt. 2 C.W. Cousins to J.F. Herbst 9th August, 1927.

2. Central Archives: Department of Labour 4002/1103 Pt. 2 Memorandum on Natives under the Industrial Code by the Secretary for Labour 2nd September, 1927, para. 1.

3. Ibid, para. 1.

community, Africans had been regarded as wholly the concern of the Native Affairs Department.⁽¹⁾ After a time, however, the permanent officials had begun to wonder whether in fact the Native Affairs Department was an appropriate body to deal with the interests of Africans in towns and this doubt had been shared to some extent by the Advisory Council of Labour, a body also established in 1924, composed of representatives of industry and farming, employers and employees and convened from time to time by the Minister of Labour for consultation.⁽²⁾ The memorandum went on to recognise that

"the native is not de facto covered advantageously at the present time by any of the industrial legislation. Indeed, he is suffering displacement and he is further being taught to believe that differentiation is taking place on the ground of colour and race, and that the European fears him, fears particularly his competition in industry, and is endeavouring by legislative methods to rule him out of industry." ⁽³⁾

It was because of the discrimination experienced by Africans, the Secretary for Labour admitted, that the I.C.U. was formed and gained strength. While it could not be registered, that union could also not be ignored.

"Its claims to membership are numerically somewhat formidable. It has attained recognition from the Amsterdam International; it has been brought conspicuously to the notice of the British Trade Union movement, which is apparently inclined to afford it a very considerable degree of sympathy, and when Clements Kadalie returns to South Africa he will probably return with something like a flourish of trumpets and make an exceptionally vigorous appeal for membership support for his organisation. Being the first in the field, he has claims for consideration; but it must be frankly admitted that the Department has not sufficient knowledge of the real workings of the organisation, nor of its hold

1. Ibid, para. 2.

2. Ibid, para. 1,2.

3. Ibid, para. 2.

"upon natives in industry, to commit itself to any view as to whether the movement is sinister or whether it is capable of being guided into reasonable channels." (1)

Although he did not go so far as to make recommendations, Cousins hinted at the sort of change that he himself thought acceptable.⁽²⁾ There was no reason, he thought,

"why the Wage Act, when the Government so decides, should not be used as well for the improvement of native conditions of labour as for those of Europeans. This Act, perhaps more than any other part of the industrial legislation of the Union, is a law which could be used quite positively and directly to better conditions of native workers in industry." (3)

Cousins even envisaged, though his memorandum does not baldly say so, an amendment to the Industrial Conciliation Act to bring within its scope all Africans by a change in the definition of employee or by de-proclaiming "certain pass areas such as the Witwatersrand ... under the Pass Laws".⁽⁴⁾

If that were done, Africans would, whenever an industrial agreement was negotiated, have to be represented, perhaps by an official of the Native Affairs Department, perhaps ~~even~~ still ~~at~~ ose le dire - by a trade union, possibly a "parallel" union, a black branch of a white union.⁽⁵⁾

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1. Ibid, para. 4.
 2. His discussion explicitly excludes black labour in the mining industry. (Ibid, para. 2).
 3. Ibid, para. 3.
 4. A reference to the Transvaal Urban Areas Pass Act of 1909 which required Africans to carry passes in proclaimed urban areas, distinct from the labour districts. (T.R.H. Davenport: The Beginnings of Urban Segregation in South Africa; the Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923 and its Background, Grahamstown, 1971, pamphlet, p.10).
 5. Memorandum on Natives under the Industrial Code, para. 4.

If anything does emerge from the mandarin prose of the Secretary for Labour, it is the recognition that black unions were an inevitable development and must be accepted and guided, above all, steered away from politics and "race antagonism."

In the ensuing weeks the question of the place of Africans in industry was discussed by the Advisory Council of Labour, which met in September, and by a conference representing the Department of Labour, the Native Affairs Department and the Native Affairs Commission, whose discussions took place in October and November. The Advisory Council, though far from unanimously, expressed itself in favour of the ^{application of the} Wage Act to Africans,⁽¹⁾ and, with some reservations, this was also the view of the inter-departmental conference that was held at the end of October at Cape Town under the chairmanship of C.W. Cousins and, after a month's adjournment, had a final day's session at Pretoria. The deliberations of the conference were inconclusive. There was no voting, but the chairman gained the impression that the conference was not averse from the use of the machinery of the Wage Act on behalf of "such natives as those for whom the Bloemfontein Native Wages Commission endeavoured to get a minimum wage fixed." in other words those engaged in occupations - other than farming and mining - where the question of "civilised standards" did not arise. In those cases where it seemed appropriate for the Wage Board to intervene on behalf of Africans, then it would be desirable, the conference thought, for an additional member or members to be appointed to

1. Central Archives: Department of Labour 4002/1103 Pt. 2 C.W. Cousins to T. Boydell 19th September, 1927.

the Board in consultation with the Minister of Native Affairs.⁽¹⁾ This is as far as very tentative agreements would go. The Native Affairs Department, represented by Major Herbst (the Secretary) and Major Cooke (the Director of Native Labour) refused to commit itself upon the question of bringing Africans within the scope of the Industrial Conciliation Act. The Department of Labour, however, considered that it was undesirable to extend the operation of the Wage Act without, at the same time, including them within the scope of the other Act, and it is not difficult to see why. Every time the question of black wages came up for determination, the responsibility for a decision would be thrown upon the Minister of Labour. The Wage Board could not itself make any recommendation if it felt unable to recommend a wage "suited to civilised requirements" and, in such circumstances, it was incumbent upon the Minister to instruct the Board to recommend a wage "suited to the conditions". Should, however, Africans be subject to the procedures of the Industrial Conciliation Act, then the more difficult cases, those involving Africans in racially mixed occupations, would fall to the industrial councils established under the Act. A further objection raised by the Department was that inclusion of Africans in the working of the Wages Act and their exclusion from the Industrial Conciliation Act "would definitely operate against the slower but more healthy process allowing the development of Native participation in industries which the Department knows to be essential."⁽²⁾

1. Central Archives: Department of Labour 4002/1103 Pt. 2 Chairman's Report on the Conference 25th November, 1927.

2. Note appended to the Chairman's Report.

While all this activity was going on in Cape Town and Pretoria, Kadalie was continuing his European tour. On his return to London in mid-June he rented an office at the I.L.P. headquarters, employed a typist and "worked enormously".⁽¹⁾ "Everyone," wrote Winifred Holtby to Mrs. Lewis, "seems to be liking Kadalie. Mrs. Swannich⁽²⁾ says that she has been charmed with his modesty and simplicity."⁽³⁾ And earlier she had written:

"I really believe that he is doing good work ... H.N. Brailsford ... found him both interesting and attractive ... So far as I can gather, he has been both wise and enterprising. And people are certainly impressed...

"I personally have been delighted by his behaviour. Of course, one never knows how long these things last, and he is clever. But certainly his manner, to me for instance, is an absolute contradiction of the saying in South Africa that if you treat a native man like a human being he takes advantage. I have spent hours with him, in his office, in his hotel, in the Penn Club. Never has he by look or word transgressed the laws of courtesy and profound respect, and his manner with the labour leader and so on whom he encounters, is admirable with its mixture of deference and dignity. He seems to get on well with his typist, a competent, but quite young girl, who takes him perfectly for granted and whom he treats as any other gentleman would treat his typist.

"I feel sometimes that it is too good to last and that we shall find a fatal flaw somewhere. I suspect that he is spending a lot of money, but as he says, if he can do twice the work with an office, isn't it worth it, especially as he is being offered now financial help for the I.C.U. ...? (4)

By his own account, the six weeks Kadalie spent in Britain, until he left for a second visit to the Continent at the end of

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1. W. Holtby to Mrs. Lewis 3rd July, (1927) (B/Wits).
 2. Editor of Foreign Affairs.
 3. W. Holtby to Mrs. Lewis 27th July, (1927) (B/Wits).
 4. W. Holtby to Mrs. Lewis 3rd July, (1927) (B/Wits). One wonders what "fatal flaw" Miss Holtby feared to find.

July, were very full ones, passed "in a glare of publicity".⁽¹⁾ Fenner Brockway and Winifred Holtby arranged for him a programme of speeches, talks with labour leaders and encounters with the influential. He visited the headquarters of the Labour Party and of the Trades Union Congress, the headquarters of the Co-operative Movement, some trade union offices and the House of Commons, where he spoke to the Commonwealth Group of the Labour Party and met, among others, George Lansbury, J.R. Clynes and Arthur Henderson. The Imperialism Committee of the I.L.P. arranged two week-end schools at which Kadalie spoke. After three weeks in London Kadalie made a tour of Scotland, the North of England and the Midlands, meeting people and addressing dozens of gatherings.⁽²⁾

The first week of August was spent at the Congress of the I.F.T.U. in Paris, where he urged the International Federation to bring into its ranks the workers of Asia and Africa in the interests of the workers of Europe itself.⁽³⁾ From Paris Kadalie made his way to Amsterdam, where he paid a brief visit to the headquarters of the I.F.T.U. and of the International Transport Workers' Federation. He addressed meetings there and at Utrecht before paying a flying visit to Berlin at the end of August as

1. C. Kadalie: My Life, p.114.

2. C. Kadalie to Mrs. Lewis 10th August, 1927 (B/Wits). In Glasgow he met Dr. Donald Fraser, the Nyasaland missionary, and in Edinburgh one of his teachers at Livingstonia, Cullen Young. (At one of the week-end schools he renewed acquaintance with Edward Roux, then at Cambridge. (C. Kadalie: Op.cit., p.116-117).

3. Ibid, p.119-120.

guest of the German Federation of Labour.⁽¹⁾ The opportunity of a trip to Russia was rejected in favour of one to the United States (where he was engaged to give a lecture tour), there not being enough time for a visit to both. In the event he did not go to America either, because his tour was cancelled from New York.⁽²⁾

Back in England, after an unpleasant experience in London trying to find a hotel that would take a black man,⁽³⁾ Kadalie travelled north to Edinburgh to attend the Conference of the T.U.C. In spite of his hopes, he was not accepted as a fraternal delegate lest this should irritate the white labour movement in South Africa. However, he was cordially received and was introduced to Ramsay Macdonald.⁽⁴⁾ Returning to London, he raised, in the course of discussion with his English sympathisers on the future of the I.C.U., the question of obtaining the services of an experienced trade unionist who would spend some months in South Africa to give advice on "the technical side of industrial organisation - accounts, congress management, wage boards, trade union law, branch offices, etc." This, he thought, would have the

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1. There is some confusion in the autobiography. " ... I fixed in a week to visit Holland during the month of September, 1927." (p.121) "My visit to Holland was limited to a week-end, as from there I had to proceed to Berlin, for a hurried visit. The trip was undertaken towards the end of August, 1927." (p.122).
 2. Ibid, p.137. Elsewhere (p.122) he implies that he decided not to go to the U.S.A. because the deterioration of the Union's affairs necessitated his returning home.
 3. A. Creech Jones to C. Kadalie 15th September, 1927 (WH).
 4. W. Holtby to Mrs. Lewis 8th September, 1927 (B/Wits).

additional advantage of bringing about "improved relations with white labour in South Africa, as of course the English organiser would go out with fraternal greetings to the white unions and labour movement." He was, however, a little apprehensive about Champion's reaction to the idea of importing a white man to tell black men ^{how} to do their work.⁽¹⁾ The suggestion was taken up with enthusiasm by Winifred Holtby, Creech Jones and Fenner Brockway, who thought that the best arrangement would be to persuade a British trade union to lend an official, since that would relieve the I.C.U. of the expense of engaging an expert. Miss Holtby thought that Creech Jones himself would have been ideal - "so sane and moderate and tolerant"⁽²⁾ but there was never any real chance of his going.

The question of an adviser was one of the topics discussed at a wide ranging conversation between Kadalie and Creech Jones on 14th September. Jones had in mind a rather longer period - at least a year - for the adviser to stay with the I.C.U. and he also thought that the Union could do with "first-class secretarial assistance on the staff side", a woman with "considerable courage as well as determination". He urged the National Secretary to take advantage of his stay in Britain to study carefully the methods and constitution of British trade unions and to seek advice from lawyers on the precise legal position of the I.C.U., what it could do and what it could not. On his return home, he should ensure that there was a constant flow to his English supporters, to the I.F.T.U. and to any German sympathiser whose

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

support he could enlist, of information for publication in the European press.⁽¹⁾ Kadalie should eschew as far as possible political activities.

"The Union must establish itself in the public mind in South Africa first and foremost as an industrial organisation, attempting by ordinary trade union efforts to improve the standard of life of the native workers ... It is therefore important that whatever is done in the political field is done with caution so that no one can suggest that the Union is unconstitutional, or behaving in an unconstitutional manner, or that it is stirring up racial feeling, or that its main interest is politics to the prejudice of the white government. The Union must not be side-tracked by Communism, and should not attempt to put itself in the position of being an industrial movement one minute and a political party the next ..." (2)

Nevertheless, there must be an "attempt to secure political redress" and Creech Jones, a little naïvely, thought the best plan would be for the I.C.U., if it could do so in good conscience after the Native Administration Bill, to seek affiliation to the South African Labour Party. Kadalie, who was keen on trying to raise £3,000 to establish a printing press, was tactfully advised to aim at a more modest objective, a small press costing three or four hundred pounds.⁽³⁾

Winifred Holtby, too, tried to dissuade Kadalie from setting his heart upon such a luxury and made it clear that he had no hope of raising so large a sum of money in England. Then, after very sensibly pointing out that, with the passage of the Native Administration Act and the eviction of farm labourers, the I.C.U.

1. A. Creech Jones to C. Kadalie 15th September, 1927 (WH). "I think, too, you should have a contact with the Society of Friends in this country, because Boer opinion pays very real attention to the opinion of the Quakers." (Ibid).

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

would need to conserve its resources, she touched delicately on the subject of Kadalie's personal extravagance.

"I have heard some criticism, not from one quarter alone, and always from people ready to help you, of the lavishness of your expenditure. I know that some items of this have been necessarily heavy. You have had to travel and get secretarial help and to print pamphlets. But while on the one hand we have been asking for financial help for your work ..., on the other we have seen you able, apparently, to manage without yourself, as representative of the I.C.U., practising economy. I know that in a country not one's own, and in time of pressing work, it is difficult to economise ... But I do know from my own experience, that when one is asking for money ... people seem much more ready to give if the representative seems himself or herself, to be practising the most rigid economy and self-denial for his or her cause ... because I felt that there was just sufficient truth in what is said ... to be important, I thought that you might forgive my frankness for the sake of such small service as I have been able to do your cause ..." (1)

Like Creech Jones Miss Holtby advised Kadalie to concentrate on industrial issues and to secure political reform by way of affiliation to the South African Labour Party. If the Labour Party should spurn the I.C.U.'s advances, then external pressure could be brought to bear through the Labour and Socialist International and the British Commonwealth Labour League. She did not make it at all clear how the I.C.U. was to keep out of politics when most of the disabilities afflicting African workers had a political origin; and she herself admitted some substantial exceptions to the general rule of political detachment, accepting the reasonableness of participation "in the political struggle on specific points, say the Pass Laws, the Native Administration law, and the native franchise." (2)

1. W. Holtby to C. Kadalie 7th September, (1927) (B/UCT). Kadalie does not seem to have been offended. (C. Kadalie to W. Holtby 8th September, 1927, B/UCT).

2. She advised against contact with the League Against Imperialism.

At the end of September, on Creech Jones's advice,⁽¹⁾ the National Secretary left once more for the Continent, this time to Austria, where he was the guest of the Austrian Trades Union Congress. He stopped over at Geneva, where he obtained the advice of Harold Grimshaw on a new constitution for the I.C.U. drafted by Jones.⁽²⁾ His tour took him to Innsbruck, Salzburg, Linz, Vienna and Graz, at each of which he delivered speeches. In Vienna he was presented to the Mayor.⁽³⁾ He left the Austrian capital on 7th October to be the guest for the second time of the German Federation of Labour on another visit to Berlin. From Berlin it was back to London. Altogether Kadalie, who thought it was his "duty to show Europe that we did not neglect the social side in our onward march to a higher civilisation",⁽⁴⁾ seems to have had a jolly time in Austria and Germany.

One of Kadalie's chief preoccupations during his weeks in England was mobilising opinion against the Native Administration Bill. Legal opinion obtained from the liberal barrister, Holford Knight, was predictably condemnatory; the Fabians wrote to the papers; The Manchester Guardian pontificated; and at a rally in the East End on 13th October Kadalie was joined on the platform by Fenner Brockway, Winifred Holtby, a former secretary of the I.F.T.U., and a canon of Westminster. Lord Olivier, in a

1. A. Creech Jones to C. Kadalie 15th September, 1927 (WH).

2. C. Kadalie: My Life and the I.C.U., p.129.

3. Ibid, p.129-133.

4. Ibid, p.130.

message to the rally, after suggesting that the purpose of the Bill was to take away from Africans the right to criticise Europeans, concluded: "The action of the South African Labour Party in supporting this special anti-Native legislation is disastrous and contemptible."⁽¹⁾

Soon afterwards, on 28th October, Kadalie set sail for South Africa on the Balmoral Castle. He took with him the promise of a number of scholarships (at Fircroft College in Birmingham, Ruskin College in Oxford and the International People's College at Elsinore in Denmark), the possibility of getting an English adviser, the sympathies of many well-wishers and a great deal of advice. Everyone took care to impress upon him the need for moderation. Typical was the earnest warning of Charles Roden Buxton:-

"I am sure you feel that very great responsibility which rests upon you now, and how absolutely essential it is to avoid injuring the prospects of the I.C.U. at this critical stage in its development. I know you will exercise the greatest care in accuracy of statements, in moderation of policy, and in strictness with regard to accounts. Your opponents will be on the watch for any failure in these points, and will make the very most of it, if it occurs." (2)

By October, 1927, the I.C.U. had indeed reached a "critical stage in its development", but it was a crisis of existence that was already beyond remedy.

1. Ibid, p.126-127. The opinion of Holford Knight has survived, dated 14th September, 1927 (B/Wits). The rally of 13th October passed unnoticed by The Times.

2. Ibid, p.139-140.

CHAPTER VII

The Collapse of the I.C.U., 1927-1928

"It is no use wasting time about the shortcomings of Kadalie. He has done what no man ever did and has reached a place where he has failed as a man. He has a clean record. He is the only black man who has led his people for ten years enjoying their confidence ... Today Kadalie has soldiers but no officers. He is a Field Marshal without Generals. He must fall and that is the end of him."

(A.W.G. Champion 26th June, 1928).

There is ample evidence that, by Kadalie's return from Europe, the I.C.U. was past its prime and that the grandiose plans for re-organisation which he had conceived during his absence were futile. The loss of support may have had something to do with the inability of the Union to take advantage of industrial unrest that occurred during the winter of 1927⁽¹⁾ - a token strike of fifteen hundred dockworkers in Durban on 16th June in protest against the arrest of poll-tax defaulters; a strike at the end of June of four and a half thousand coal miners in Natal for higher wages; and a strike of four hundred odd contract labourers at the Kazerne railway goods shed in Johannesburg on 7th July. All were spontaneous and short-lived. Although the I.C.U. was suspected of being behind the coal strike, it is difficult to see why, because the Union was prevented by the mine managements from openly penetrating the labour force.⁽²⁾ That strike can scarcely be accounted an I.C.U. failure. It is the inept handling of the Durban dispute that is most surprising and of the Johannesburg one that is most inexcusable. One would have expected a more vigorous policy from Champion as Acting National Secretary. It is evident, however, that he was ill-at-ease in Johannesburg. "There is nothing so difficult," he wrote at the end of his six months in office, "for one who comes from a different

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1. This is the argument of E. Roux: Time Longer than Rope, p.173 and H.J. and R.E. Simons: Op.cit., p.362-364. The latter also refers to the situation among the farm workers. "When farm workers in Natal, who were threatened with eviction for belonging to the union, suggested a strike, the officials sidetracked them with unrealistic proposals to buy land for the evicted tenants." (p. 363). Was a strike less unrealistic in such circumstances?
 2. The Natal Witness 28th and 29th June, 1927. The surviving fragment of a letter from Champion to an unknown correspondent (F/Undated/25) would seem to show that he had nothing to do with the strike and that the I.C.U. had no following in the mines.

place to another different place, like myself, who came from Durban as a Provincial Secretary to the Head Office in Johannesburg and to manage people who have their own lines of policies."⁽¹⁾ He apparently spent a good deal of his time in Durban, where, however, he missed the June dock strike. The senior I.C.U. official there was Sam Dunn, the amiable but lethargic Acting Provincial Secretary.

During Champion's protracted absences from Johannesburg Head Office was left under the control of H.D. Tyamzashe, the Complaints and Research Secretary, who was an able journalist but a weak labour leader. Ineffectual and, in any case, all too likely to give way to pressure from Mrs. Lewis, he advised the Kazerne workers to go back to work and congratulated himself upon the moderation of his policy.⁽²⁾ The strikers, who wanted an increase on their existing wage of £2.10s. to £3.0s. a month, ignored Tyamzashe's advice and were forthwith dismissed and replaced.⁽³⁾ The strike showed the I.C.U. in a poor light. Here were men, mostly members of the Union, whose grievance was unknown to it until they were on the point of striking and who then evidently received no support and little sympathy. It was the employer, a labour contractor, who brought Tyamzashe into the dispute and it is clear that his hand was strengthened by the I.C.U.'s disavowal of responsibility. The Union had neither the organisation nor the ability to keep open

1. Fragment of draft of Acting National Secretary's Report to the National Council 17th November, 1927 (F 1927/118).

2. The Workers' Herald 15th July, 1927. "The reasonable attitude of I.C.U. officials ... should prove to the Government that they are not dealing with a lot of hotheads."

3. Cape Times 9th July, 1927.

proper channels of communication with its own members or to carry out purposeful negotiations with employers. Many members must have wondered what was to be gained from paying subscriptions to such an organisation.⁽¹⁾

These urban events, however, were overshadowed by the rural problem, the plight of ejected members of the Union, in the latter part of 1927 and early 1928. The extent of the problem can only be guessed at. Eviction was evidently very common in Natal⁽²⁾ and there were many reports of evictions in the Orange Free State.⁽³⁾ Once again the experience of the two Transvaal branches, Volksrust and Wakkerstroom, illustrates the situation. In March, 1928, "evictions reached a climax ... despair gained the place of confidence in the organisation and a general decline in financial strength inevitably followed."⁽⁴⁾ Confronted with a problem of

1. H.J. and R.E. Simons: Op.cit., p.363-364 suggests that the I.C.U. was equally pusillanimous in June, 1928, when there was a big strike on the Lichtenburg diamond fields following a wage reduction from 20-18 shillings to 12 shillings a week. "Government officials persuaded the diggers to offer the men 15s a week, at which point Kadalie and his lieutenants pledged their support. They would induce the strikers to accept the 15s. and return to work while they negotiated a final settlement." Kadalie's actual statement conveys a different impression. "The head office officials of the I.C.U. have decided to support the strikers in fighting against the reduction of wages, and for this purpose four officials of the Union will set out for the diggings to-night. Their object is to induce the strikers to accept 15s. as a basis for further negotiation, and it is also the intention of the Union to approach the Wage Board to investigate conditions on the diggings. It is the contention of I.C.U. officials that the diggers broke the natives' contracts."

2. The Natal Witness 23rd June, 1927.

3. The Workers' Herald 18th January and 12th May, 1928.

4. Report on Volksrust and Wakkerstroom, I.C.U. News Letter 5th December, 1928 (B/UCT).

such gravity there was little the I.C.U. leaders could do. Champion, as Acting National Secretary, in 1927, fell back upon the only policy that he knew - letters to those in authority and recourse to the courts. Cowley obligingly opened a branch office at Ixopo on the strength of an I.C.U. promise of sixty pounds' worth of business a month⁽¹⁾ and other lawyers were found willing to endure the threats of their white fellow citizens in the cause of justice. The scale of the evictions, however, was too immense for the resources of the I.C.U.⁽²⁾ As for letters, these achieved little enough. As early as May, 1927, before the evictions had started, but when there were complaints in Parliament and the press about the activities of the I.C.U., Champion wrote to the Prime Minister requesting an interview, so that he might hear at first hand the I.C.U. case.⁽³⁾ After a considerable interval the request was refused, though with the utmost courtesy.⁽⁴⁾ At the end of July the Acting National Secretary wrote to the Natal Agricultural Union, shortly before its special congress to consider the activities of the I.C.U., asking it to let him attend its meeting in order to present the I.C.U.'s point of view and appealing to it not to act "contrary to the spirit of justice and equity and in opposition to the wishes of many good hearted people in this country."⁽⁵⁾ While its secretary replied in a conciliatory way, asking for "an official

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1. C. Cowley to Provincial Secretary, I.C.U. 15th November, 1927 (F 1928 - sic - /21f).
 2. In one Natal branch alone a monthly bill could exceed £200. (A. W.G. Champion to Branch Secretary, Estcourt 9th December, 1927, F 1927/131).
 3. A.W.G. Champion to General Hertzog 27th May, 1927 (F 1927/14).
 4. Private Secretary to the Prime Minister to A.W.G. Champion 14th June, 1927 (F 1927/20).
 5. A.W.G. Champion to Secretary, Natal Agricultural Union 31st July, 1927 (F/NEUF).

statement as to the position of your Institution, setting forth its point of view, aims and objects", he nonetheless refused to invite Champion to the congress,⁽¹⁾ which, in fact, called for stern government measures against the I.C.U.⁽²⁾ Then, in September, Champion again wrote to the Prime Minister, asking for government help for the evicted tenants, but the reply that came from the Native Affairs Department almost two months later merely urged him to advise "Natives displaced from farms" to make their difficulties known to the magistrates of the districts or to the local officers of the Department.⁽³⁾

At its August meeting at King William's Town the National Council decided to investigate the possibility of purchasing land for the homeless and to purchase maize in bulk for re-sale at low prices to those in distress.⁽⁴⁾ Land purchase was a desperate and unrealistic remedy, given the size of the problem and the ever diminishing income of the I.C.U. As early as July, 1927, there appears to have been insufficient money to pay branch secretaries,⁽⁵⁾ and in November Glass commented,

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1. Secretary to A.W.G. Champion 8th August, 1927 (F/NEUF). Champion did not comply with the secretary's request, being loathe, no doubt, to send a copy of the Constitution with its arresting preamble. He answered rather vaguely. (A.W.G. Champion to Secretary, Natal Agricultural Union 10th August, 1927, F/NEUF).
 2. See p.379. In October Champion wrote to the South African Agricultural Union, complaining that "all the Provincial Agricultural unions did not accept our offer for sending our representative to be present when matters affecting this Union were discussed." He wanted it to receive an I.C.U. delegation. (A.W.G. Champion to Secretary, S.A. Agricultural Union 31st October, 1927, (F 1927/103)).
 3. E.R. Gathorne to A.W.G. Champion 14th November, 1927 (F 1927/119).
 4. Minutes of National Council November, 1927 (F 1927/124), p.16; A.W.G. Champion to Keable 'Mote 3rd November, 1927 (F/General Letters/173).
 5. Branch Secretary, Vryheid to A.J. Phoofole 27th October, 1927 (F 1927/96); Branch Secretary, Ladysmith to National Secretary 3rd November, 1927 (F 1927/110); C.D. Modiakgotla to A.W.G. Champion 9th July, 1927 (F/General Letters/4).

"Many branches which were active and revenue-producing during the first half of the year are now practically defunct, and it seems desirable that some effort be made to revive them." (1)

By April, 1928, "income had fallen down more than 75% in so much so (sic) that many officials had to go unapid and Accounts were not receiving that attention they should".⁽²⁾ Even Durban, the milch cow of 1926-1927, was drying up by the end of 1927. Income reached its peak as early as April/May, 1927, after which enrolment fees and subscriptions fell continuously.⁽³⁾ The decline of Durban had a great deal to do with two great financial scandals that came to a head in November, 1927. The first one had been in the making for many months and concerned George Lenono, a foundation member of the I.C.U., a Basuto and a clerk in the Native Recruiting Corporation. The story began in October or November, 1926, with an anonymous letter sent to the National Secretary when he was in Durban which complained about the financial administration of the Natal Provincial Secretary, Champion, who suspected the authorship of Lenono. This was followed by an interview Lenono had with Kadalie at which the former asked why it was that certain funds belonging to Durban branch were banked in Champion's personal account and the property of the Union held in his name. Kadalie, at that time being on the best terms with Champion, to whom he owed the success he had had in flouting the ban upon his movements, simply passed Lenono's complaint on to the Provincial Secretary.⁽⁴⁾ Champion thereupon

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1. Statement showing Head Office Income and Expenditure 1st May to 31st October, 1927, 2nd November, 1928 (F 1927/107).
 2. C. Kadalie to N. Leys 8th August, 1928 (B/UCT).
 3. Investigation and Report - Natal Provincial and Durban Offices of the I.C.U., 4th April, 1928, Annexure F (F 1928/24).
 4. G. Lenono to C. Kadalie 15th November, 1926 (F 1926/53a); G. Lenono: Loc.cit. The former speaks of "money for the building fund", the latter of "the reserve funds of the Durban Branch".

accused Lenono of speaking about him "in private corners" and seeking to "undermine his authority and lower his dignity in the eyes of Mr. Kadalie".⁽¹⁾ Lenono tried next to get the branch executive (of which his wife was a member) to hear his case. The branch chairman, however, was not going to get involved.

"Whilst in full sympathy with the views expressed in your letter, my Committee considered the matter now out of their jurisdiction ... I hope you will not take my Committee's findings with any feeling of misgiving, as the same was arrived at in the very best of feelings, and was considered to be in the best interest of the parties concerned." ⁽²⁾

In December, 1926, the Communists were expelled and Lenono extended the range of his accusations to include Kadalie, suggesting that La Guma was dismissed for being too honest. Kadalie (once again informing Champion) wrote to him a denial that was cordial, even jaunty, wishing him a Merry Christmas.⁽³⁾ Lenono was not amused and claimed that he was being threatened, which was hardly true.⁽⁴⁾ Getting no satisfaction, he collected the correspondence together and had it printed, together with an introduction, as a pamphlet with the aim of discrediting his enemies. It seems likely that Ncwana and Nyombolo were behind this move. Someone certainly made some improvements in Lenono's English. The essence of the pamphlet was the accusation that some of the officials of the I.C.U.

1. G. Lenono: Loc.cit.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Kadalie had merely said: "I desire to warn you that you are entering a dangerous path", apparently a path leading into error, rather than peril.

notably Champion, were "exploiting the less intelligent members of their race for their own personal interests". Arriving in Durban with nothing, Champion, it was alleged, had acquired landed property and established businesses with I.C.U. funds, which he alone administered and which he used as though they were his own money. Champion was so angry that he sued the pamphleteer for libel. This was in March, 1927, but the case did not come on until November, just as Kadalie got back to South Africa.⁽¹⁾ The plea was dismissed and the judge, Justice Tatham, had some caustic remarks to make about the financial administration of the I.C.U. in Natal.⁽²⁾ There can be no doubt, he said, that

"while the affairs of the I.C.U. at Durban were nominally controlled by a Committee, it was the Plaintiff who exercised real power. So great was his domination that he was permitted to treat the funds ... as his own; to keep them in his own pocket, or, as he asks me to believe, in some drawer at his office, until he opened an account at a Bank in his own name ... He was also allowed to assume the power to use the funds as he thought proper; to embark upon trading schemes on behalf, as he says, of the organisation, but in his own name, and to use the trust funds for that purpose, or any other purpose to which he chose to apply them ...

"All this was in violation of the Constitution ... Rule 12 (a) directed that all funds of the I.C.U. are to be deposited with the Standard Bank in the name of the Organisation. For thirteen months no funds were deposited in any Bank, but were kept by the Plaintiff. When at length an account was opened at the Standard Bank on the 2nd October, 1926, it was opened in the Plaintiff's own name, and on his own showing the funds of the I.C.U. became inextricably mixed up with his own money ...

"Moreover Rule 12(f) prohibits cash disbursements without the permission of the Head Office of the Organisation. Some thousands of pounds of cash disbursements were in fact made by the Plaintiff without the sanction of any authority except his own; whether these payments were for the benefit of the Organisation or not, it is impossible ... to say. He attempts to excuse both these violations of the Constitution on the plea that both were authorised by the Head Office in general terms, or by Kadalie. Such authorisation as he professes to rely

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1. Telegram from A.W.G. Champion to C. Kadalie n.d. (F/Undated MSS/30). Gumbs was in Durban for the trial.
 2. Champion appealed (The East London Daily Dispatch 5th December, 1927), but apparently later changed his mind, presumably because there was no money left to pay the lawyers.

"upon was not given until long after a great deal of the funds had already been so improperly dealt with; but, in any event, he must have known, for he is a well educated man, that no permission from Kadalie, or even from the Head Office, could thus override the Constitution and the protection it professed to give the members of the I.C.U.

"... Such books as the Plaintiff kept are useless for the purpose of disentangling the financial affairs of the I.C.U. from his private affairs. His unchecked control of receipts and expenditure, of which he alone kept records, left him free to enter in the books what figures he chose as records of both.

"... I was unfavourably impressed by the demeanour of the Plaintiff. His evasive answers and uneasy demeanour were unsatisfactory. He gave me the impression of being clever but untruthful. On the other hand both the Defendant and his wife seemed easy and confident. The wife of the Defendant is an intelligent and well educated woman. Her evidence I accept generally, nor do I see any reason to disbelieve that of the Defendant."

The African Workers' Club: "...He says that he founded it in the interests of the Organisation. He produces no record of any authorisation to do so, He acquired the property in his own name, and, without any recorded authority from the Committee, he treated the concern as being under his sole control. Though ostensibly under the aegis of the I.C.U. and though the funds of the I.C.U. were used for its purposes, he limited the use of the Club to those members of the I.C.U. who were willing to pay for the right to use it, without regard to the fact that he possessed no authority from those members of the I.C.U. who were unwilling to pay for the use of the Club to apply their money to the purpose of founding and supporting it. He induced a large number of Natives to pay two shillings and sixpence a head to purchase chairs for the Club. The chairs cost about £75. The moneys subscribed for the purpose of buying them amounted to some hundreds of pounds ... How much he collected, and what he did with the money, is known only to himself, for it is impossible, in the absence of proper accounts and vouchers, to ascertain this; but whatever was collected found its way either into his pocket or into his private Bank account.

"Though nominally there was a Committee responsible for the control of all these concerns, it did not function in practice. The Plaintiff did what he liked. He treated the funds of the Club as he treated the funds of the I.C.U. ..."

The payment of I.C.U. funds into a personal bank account: "... The fact is admitted, but an attempt was made to justify it by the assertion that the Banks refused to allow an account to be opened in the name of the I.C.U. Other than his own statement there is no evidence to support this assertion. If it had been true, he ought to have been able to support it by the evidence of some Bank official. In any event, even if it is true a conscientious man would have found some way of opening an account which would keep the Trust funds separate from his own private moneys. This he could easily have done by opening two accounts at different Banks, or even at one Bank, differentiating them by distinguishing numbers. He made no attempt to do so. It is true that Kadalie seems to have expressed satisfaction with the Plaintiff's methods. If that is the case, it

"amounts to no more than a suggestion that Kadalie was a party to a highly improper method of dealing with Trust moneys. The method employed is improper in any event, but becomes highly improper when carried out in violation of an express provision in the Constitution of the I.C.U. Natives who became members of the I.C.U. and paid their subscriptions to the Plaintiff did so, no doubt, under the impression that the funds were dealt with under the safeguards provided by the Constitution, which, if conformed to, afforded adequate protection against their misapplication. Those safeguards did not in fact exist, except in print, for the Plaintiff disregarded them and his methods made it easy for him to misapply the funds with little danger of detection ... I cannot ignore the fact that his Bank Pass-Book, produced upon my order, shows that the Plaintiff, who in September, 1925, on his own showing had no balance and a 'brick for a pillow' has now a sum of £391.11.4 to the credit of his account, a sum which he asserts is his own money. He has somehow succeeded in amassing that sum between September, 1925, and November, 1927. Other than his unsupported statement there is nothing to show that this money has come from his own resources ...

"It is said that I ought not to take too strict a view of the admitted irregularities of the Plaintiff because he is a Native and was engaged in a benevolent work. The answer is obvious. Persons who do not understand the duties and responsibilities of Trustees should not undertake them, but the Plaintiff is a well educated man of considerable intellectual attainments, and is quite capable of understanding such responsibilities. In any event he had Solicitors at his service and ought to have consulted them. It is not conceivable that either Messrs. Cowley & Cowley or any other Solicitors would have sanctioned his methods." (1)

The Tatham judgment was not wholly fair. The judge commented:

"It is impossible on the facts as I have found them to have proved to come to any other conclusion than that the facts warrant the comments, which state inferences, which may fairly be drawn from the facts which ... were published by the Defendant honestly and without malice."

The truth of the facts that came to light is undeniable, though they were set out in a harsh, unsympathetic and remorseless fashion.

What is less certain is that it was fair to infer from his bizarre and naïve bookkeeping that Champion was "exploiting the less intelligent members" of his people, and what is still less certain is that Lenono's behaviour was honest and free from malice. Opening his campaign with an anonymous letter, Lenono proceeded in a manner that

1. Investigation and Report: Natal Provincial and Durban Offices of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (I.C.U.), Annexure B, Mr. Justice Tatham's judgment in the Champion v. Lenono case (F 1928/24).

conveys an impression of a mere search for vengeance, an impression strengthened by his association with the enemies of the I.C.U., Ncwana and Nyombolo, in the publication of his pamphlet. Subsequent demonstrations of loyalty to Champion indicate that many I.C.U. members in Durban were convinced of his innocence, however damning the evidence appeared to be. Clearly Champion himself thought his integrity was so manifest that his conduct would be vindicated as a matter of course, though he must have known that the deviousness and equivocation of his administration would be brought to light. One can only express surprise, too, that his solicitors did not discourage his entering upon a libel suit that gave no promise of a successful outcome.

No sooner had the Lenono case been decided against Champion than the second scandal erupted, involving the ex-Acting General Secretary and the I.C.U.'s Provincial Secretary in Natal, Sam Dunn. Dunn was suspended by Champion on 2nd August, apparently at the insistence of the Union members, on the ground that he "had violated the rules of the organisation by calling in the town police to the I.C.U. office to arrest members of the I.C.U. without referring the matter to him". Champion also stated that he had gone through the books and found a loss of £500. Dunn admitted to using £416, which had gone on a car for himself, a one-ton lorry, which he left with his brother in Zululand, furniture for his house, and clearing off some old debts; and he put forward a scheme that would, he said, bring in enough money to cover the loss. Champion was unimpressed and laid charges against him. He was arrested at Komatipoort in November⁽¹⁾ when on his way to Lourenco Marques.

1. The Natal Witness 11th and 21st November, 1927. Abel Ngcobo, Dunn's successor, was arrested about the same time and also charged with theft, though of a much smaller amount. The charge, however, was withdrawn. (The East London Daily Dispatch 5th December, 1927).

Charged with theft by conversion of £800, Dunn came up for trial on 14th December. Some very damaging evidence of extraordinary laxity came out in the trial. In his statement Dunn said that

"there was a large staff of clerks, and everyone had access to the cash. The cash box was exposed in the middle of the table, and all the clerks could take change out or put money in.

"The money was supposed to be collected by the Branch Secretary or bookkeeper every evening at closing time, often after I had left. It was checked in my presence and entered in the rough cash book ... On three occasions the teller discovered a surplus of something like £10 or more as having been deposited by me. On the fourth occasion I had been in Zululand for a week, and on my return found £900 had been accumulated. It took two days to count up. I banked this money. It was put in a box and tied up.

"Everything appeared to be in order, but to my surprise and shock that same day ... the teller from the bank came and smiled and asked (me) to count the cash before it was banked. He produced a credit slip showing a further amount of £83 as having been with the cash on the deposit ...

"Champion used to draw up a monthly statement for submission to headquarters in Johannesburg. It only showed the bare receipt of cash and the expense incurred in connection with the work. There was nothing to check Champion speculating or gambling with the funds under his charge. Neither did he bank the money as often as he should have done ...

"... Kadalie had the full handling of the finances of headquarters and the Provinces generally, with the exception of Natal, which had Champion as practically an independent administrator. My discovery while up there was that the whole system of handling the finances was rotten to the core. Money came into the head office from different branches and went in various directions as quickly as it came in, through unnecessary expenses. Another serious item was the imposition of the pass law levy, introduced by the National Council before my time, and put into motion by the head office throughout the Transvaal and Free State. Whenever the money reached the head office it was placed to the reserve account, but this account was often drawn upon as a loan for other purposes ...

"The I.C.U. organisation, in its constitution, is also another thing that contains some fraudulent sections, such as death grants. This has never been carried out in the case of the death of members, with the exception of a few isolated cases. This section is a hoax, for whenever claimants appeal to the I.C.U. they have to go away with empty hands. Finally, I want to declare that the whole financial administration of the I.C.U. is a humbug, in that the constitution has been violated by the chief men themselves most miserably.

"Champion and Kadalie are the two autocrats of the organisation, and always combine to do just what they like, bluffing, of course, all the time, most of the members of the National Council." (1)

In the course of his statement the accused also alleged that the I.C.U. was hostile to the white race and that a general strike was being plotted to lead, in the event of action by the Government, to a "general upheaval all over the country".⁽¹⁾ Such evidence, offered under such circumstances, clearly has to be treated with care. Nevertheless the description of the financial arrangements confirms the impression gained from the Lenono case. This did not save Dunn, who was found guilty and sentenced to a year's imprisonment.

Champion also fell into difficulties because the various business enterprises that he ran did not pay. These included the Vuka Afrika Company (a "Native eating house") and the Natal Boot and Shoe Repairing Hospital.⁽²⁾ He also ran a newspaper Udibi Lwase Afrika, which is unlikely to have been anything other than an additional drain on resources, if the experience of The Workers' Herald, with which it needlessly competed, is any guide.⁽³⁾ If Tatham was correct, these enterprises were subsidised by the I.C.U. They certainly collapsed with it.⁽⁴⁾

Shortly after the return to South Africa of the National Secretary the National Council met in Johannesburg from 18th to 25th November,⁽⁵⁾ in order to hear Kadalie's report on his European

1. Ibid.

2. Unidentified fragment attached to a list of delegates attending the I.C.U. Conference of December, 1927 (F 1927/134), but evidently written after the Conference of April, 1928.

3. It began publication in mid-1927 with Champion as editor.

4. In May, 1928, Cowley advised Champion to sell the licence of the Vuka Afrika Company, but to be "very careful not to let the Licensing Officer know". (C. Cowley to A.W.G. Champion 15th May, 1928, F 1928/36).

5. Minutes (F 1927/124). At one stage of the proceedings the National Council was visited by the Deputy Director of the International Labour Office, Butler.

tour and also Champion's report on his term of office as Acting National Secretary. It was a full meeting, the only absentee being Thomas Mbeki, who had been suspended for drunkenness⁽¹⁾ and A.M. Jabavu. The draft of the amended Constitution that had been discussed in England with Creech Jones was accepted with only minor changes and it was decided to summon a Special Conference to Kimberley to ratify it. Nominations for the new posts were then called for. Kadalie and Champion were unanimously nominated for the two chief positions, those of General Secretary and Organising Secretary, but there was some dispute about the appointment of Financial Secretary. Kadalie wanted a white man (evidently Glass)⁽²⁾, "a man of standing, who could face the criticisms that would be hurled at us. He ... suggested that the appointment be left open until the adviser from the Trade Union Congress in Great Britain arrived."⁽³⁾ The appointment of a European to an official position encountered general opposition⁽⁴⁾ and the question was referred to the National Council Sub-Committee, a new body about to be set up. There was no dissent, however, over the appointment of a trade union adviser from Britain.

A number of resolutions were passed. It was agreed, in view of the legal opinion taken by Kadalie in England and of the sympathy aroused there, that the Native Administration Act should be tested

1. Mbeki had compounded his sin by sending off a telegram to one of the branches demanding £12, which he got. Another member of the National Council, Doyle Modiakgotla, got drunk over the weekend in the middle of the session, thus giving rise to a protracted discussion about a fitting punishment. Modiakgotla, fined ten shillings, "promised to mend his ways and ... not to touch liquor for the next six months." (Minutes, p.9, 4).

2. Minutes, p.6; A.W.G. Champion: Mehlomadala; My Experiences in the I.C.U. (Durban, 1929), p.4 (Translation, B/UCT, p.2).

3. Minutes, p.6.

4. There was a similar dispute later the same week, when Kadalie demanded a private secretary, a white^{one} "if necessary in the interests of the people". (Minutes, p.15).

in the courts and, if necessary, an appeal lodged with the Privy Council. It was further agreed to seek affiliation to the South African Trade Union Congress. A sub-committee was set up to consider the purchase of a printing press and of the Workers' Hall.

The last day and a half of the meeting were taken up with a survey of the state of the Union. In his report on Natal Champion "informed the house that the situation in Natal in regard to members of the Union who were ejected was critical and that unless farms were purchased for them, they would all leave the Union. He warned the Council of the seriousness of the question and appealed to all the Councillors to take up the question seriously."⁽¹⁾ It was shelved, left in the hands of a new National Council Sub-Committee.⁽²⁾ The other provincial reports gave rise to not a little - to use a term commonly employed - backbiting.

Champion: The "Provincial Secretary for the Free State ('Mote) has been very irresponsible ... He had received many deputations complaining about the Provincial Secretary. Indulges in excessive drinking, travels about with women, etc."

William Smith (Financial Secretary) "spoke at great length in connection with the expensive Motor Car purchased by the Provincial Secretary for O.F.S. and said he understood that this was done in spite of the instructions of the Acting National Secretary."

Champion: The Acting Provincial Secretary for Griqualand West (Doyle Modiakgotla) "had purchased a Motor Car against his instruction ..." (3)

Kadalie: The Acting Provincial Secretary for the Western Province (De Norman) "was not popular in certain circles ..."

Maduna "charged Cape Town Councillors for being backbiters (sic) and said that they only talk behind a man's back."

H.E.G. Johnson (Junior Vice-President) "had received reports that Cape Town was neglected by the Acting Provincial Secretary (De Norman)."

Champion "reported at length in connection with the drunken and other habits of the Headquarters staff and especially mentioned the case of Comrade Tyamzashe." (4)

Champion: When he took over at Head Office "the Office was closed at 12 o'clock on Saturdays and not opened till 10 a.m.

1. Minutes, p.12.

2. See p.464.

3. It was wrecked in a crash.

4. Tyamzashe forthwith resigned, but his resignation must have been withdrawn very soon.

"on Monday. No officials were available on Sundays for propaganda work."

A motion "by Comrade Tyamzashe having certain personal reference to Comrade Champion was rejected without discussion." When Champion suggested that Maduna should hand over part of his province (the Eastern Province) to Lujiza, to be added to Transkei and Border, a "heated argument ensued between Comrades Maduna and Lujiza, the one stating the other was a failure etc. etc." (1)

Perhaps the most extraordinary feature of this National Council meeting was the inability of the Councillors to come to terms with the financial situation. There was Kadalie asking for a private secretary, 'Mote asking the I.C.U. to put up buildings on vacant stands leased at Bloemfontein, Maduna asking for a hall for Port Elizabeth and the whole Council discussing the possibility of buying a printing press and the Workers' Hall and accepting without protest a great increase in the size of the salaried staff. This absurd sanguineness was to persist into the new year. (2)

The Kimberley Conference opened on Dingaan's Day, 16th November, 1927, and was in session until noon on the 20th. Two hundred delegates attended, including a number of women and several chiefs. The Conference, like the previous one, was opened by Kadalie. The South African Trade Union Congress, invited to send an official to perform the opening ceremony, politely declined on the ground that, in view of the application of the I.C.U. to affiliation, acceptance might have been "misconstrued". (3) The Mayor of Kimberley was also unavailable, because he happened to be absent from the city, but

1. Minutes, p.13-17.

2. Professor H.M. Robertson suggests the possibility that Kadalie had privately intimated that he expected large overseas financial support. This is all too likely, even though nothing had occurred in England to justify such expectations. The National Secretary was capable of considerable self-deception.

3. The Workers' Herald 18th January, 1928.

this may have been a genuine absence, as his Deputy presided over a civic reception to the delegates on the evening of the first day. De Norman was elected chairman, to deputise for President Gumbs, who did not arrive in time to participate in the first day's business. Neither of the two Vice-Presidents was there for the opening.

The proceedings of the Conference went off, so The Workers' Herald reported, "with the spirit of seriousness, myrth (sic) and goodwill".⁽¹⁾ Yet there was cause for disquiet and a good deal of anger was displayed. On the third day newspaper reporters were asked to leave,⁽²⁾ ostensibly because their reports were inaccurate and biased, more likely in order that the I.C.U.'s dirty linen could be washed in decent privacy. The Star described the early debates as stormy, and there was indeed an undercurrent of dissatisfaction with the policy of seeking closer relations with the white labour movement. "Are you a black man or a white man?" Kadalie was asked by an irate Coloured delegate from Cape Town (Warner). This was on the first day, an inauspicious preliminary to a debate upon affiliation to the South African T.U.C. The cautious report in The Workers' Herald hints at the warm feelings aroused.

"A lot of irrelevant discussion took place on this matter, many of the delegates - especially the young bloods - not knowing the significance of this step. But after the matter had been again and again explained by several intellectuals the audience was satisfied." (3).

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

Little business was done on the first day. The amjor event was the address by Kadalie, who spoke about the draft Constitution and the plans for reorganisation.

J.G. Gumbs took the chair on the second day of the Conference, Saturday 17th.⁽¹⁾ Also present was the President of the African National Congress, Rev. Z.R. Mahabane, who, invited to speak to the delegates, congratulated Kadalie upon his journey to Geneva and the I.C.U. upon its success is gaining support and recognition. Calling for "the unification of all sects and societies for the redemption of Africa", he suggested that the I.C.U. and the A.N.C. should co-operate. His impromptu speech betrayed both impatience and toughness. The "time has come", he said,

"when non-Europeans will assert their rights and let white elements know that they were an integral part of the community, they would tolerate no longer to be treated as mute animals and beasts of burden. They would no longer allow themselves to be treated as the instruments in the hands of other people, but as human beings to be consulted on matters affecting them.

"I hope, Mr. President, that your deliberations will be carried out in moderation. However, it is also a blessing to have extremists, so I would not advise you to eliminate them from your midst, as they are a blessing in disguise sometimes. (Loud applause). (2)

In moving a vote of thanks, Champion took the opportunity of chiding Congress. Three-quarters of the delegates present, including himself, were, he said, members of the A.N.C., and yet that body was engaged in an attempt to organise workers in rivalry to the I.C.U. and had also given a home to the I.C.U. officials expelled for refusing to resign from the Communist Party. He said, however, that he would welcome co-operation with Congress.

1. Ibid. One of his first tasks was to reprimand one of the delegates for entering the hall with his hat on. Decorum at Conferences was maintained with punctiliousness.

2. Ibid.

A wrangle then developed over whether the delegates should go and visit the De Beers Mines, as had been arranged by the Kimberley reception committee. (1) Champion thought it would be "a great object lesson for the young secretaries to gain first experience (sic) in such matters"; Kadalie, who had just been indirectly praised by one of the delegates as an extremist, said "he did not believe in compromise" and continued obscurely,

"Their leaders must place their cards on the table, so that if they do accept the invitation they would not go as 'good boys' of De Beers." (2)

In the end Kadalie gave way.

On the Sunday morning the Conference was addressed by a Natal chief, Peter Dhlamini of Richmond, whose remarks initiated a debate on the farm question. While paying tribute to Kadalie as "a God-send" and declaring that the people in Natal, even though homeless, were still "staunch members of the I.C.U.," he said that the Union must raise money to help those who had been ejected from farms and that an approach must be made to the Government. He was in favour of the establishment of I.C.U. stores. Kadalie's reply was not much help: he assured the chief that the plight of the people in Natal and the Orange Free State had aroused indignation in England.

"The National Council at its August session at Kingwillians-town definitely decided to buy farms for the distressed people, so Chief Dhlamini can safely go back and tell his people that. But first of all there must be supreme sacrifice on the part of all members and officials as money was badly needed." (3)

Champion, who spoke next and, as the Union's leader in the distressed province of Natal, must have been particularly sensitive to implied

1. It seems that Sol Plaatje had a hand in this. (Fragment of a letter to A. W. G. Champion 25th December, 1927, F. 1927/138).

2. The Workers' Herald, 18th January, 1928.

3. The Workers' Herald, 18th January, 1928.

criticism of the I.C.U.'s performance, was less than gracious and obviously in an ill-humour. Speaking of the hostility of the authorities in Natal and Zululand, he continued,

"To-day an ignorant Native chief had come to ask them point blank what they were going to do. They did not know whether this man was a spy, because the authorities were very clever and would naturally detail an assumingly ignorant (yet clever) person as a spy ..." (1)

In conclusion he suggested that "the enemy had succeeded to get 'good boys' into the inner councils of the I.C.U.",⁽²⁾ perhaps a dig at Kadalie. While he was speaking some of the delegates were ill-advised enough to leave the hall and were sharply rebuked for their pains.

Champion seemed to be in favour of a resolution calling for a special levy (of an impossible £5 upon each member) to buy land. In a rejoinder Kadalie, although he "admired Champion's speech" and "must give credit to Comrade Champion for getting the Government to agree to the purchase of farms",⁽³⁾ uttered some home truths about the I.C.U. machine in Natal. There was no need, he suggested, for a special levy, since

"Durban branch alone had 56,000 members, and if each member donates only 1s. they would get £2,800 right away. He alleged that the branch offices in Natal were all overstaffed ... The Head Office in Johannesburg was continually getting big accounts from Natal running into three figures. He urged that all the superfluous clerks in the Natal office must be re-

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. This was credit wrongly attributed. Although Champion had certainly negotiated with farmers for the purchase of land, the Government was unsympathetic. (Cf. A.W.G. Champion to C.L. Dube 26th October, 1927, F/General Letters/158; The Workers' Herald 12th May, 1928; Central Archives: Department of Labour 4003/1103/1 Secretary for Native Affairs to Secretary for Labour 26th October, 1927). The Chief Native Commissioner, Natal, was especially suspicious after the Lenono case. (Chief Native Commissioner to C. Cowley 9th February, 1928, F 1928/7).

"trenched. He was sorry to say that the Natalians were not rendering any service to the organisation ..." (1)

It was possibly during this speech, at all events some time during the Conference, that he criticised the high expenditure in Natal on the services of lawyers.

It is obvious that the rural situation was causing alarm. As J. Mancoe put it: "What was the good of revising the constitution when the people had no homes? He was sitting on fire at Winburg because the people demanded something practical." (2) Mdimma of Pietermaritzburg related how he and a colleague "had been sent to look into distress areas, and they discovered that there were hundreds of families actually starving. These families have offered to sacrifice their all if they could only be assured that farms would be purchased." (3) Lujiza insisted that the land question was crucial for the future of the organisation and that something had to be done.

"In August last the National Council passed a resolution at Kingwilliamstown authorising the I.C.U. to open up a grain store to assist the distressed, but so far nothing had been done yet. That was a policy of adopting resolutions, but not carrying them into effect. He wanted definite resolutions to be passed now and carried into effect with regards to the buying of farms in Natal and the Free State." (4)

1. A typically blithe non sequitur followed: "He suggested that money should be drawn from the Head Office in Johannesburg and utilised for the purpose of buying farms, and if they worked properly millions would join, and theirs would be one of the richest and most prosperous organisations." (Ibid).

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

In the end nothing constructive was done and action simply postponed once again. On the motion of Kadalie it was decided that the new National Council Sub-Committee be authorised to use whatever money there was to buy farms and report progress by the end of February, 1928. Ever optimistic, Kadalie supposed that "there was money lying idle at various branch offices."⁽¹⁾

The Conference then resumed the debate upon the draft Constitution. It is apparent that it encountered fierce criticism and that Kadalie did his best to force it through with a minimum of discussion.⁽²⁾ It appears that the acrimony was aroused less by the contents of the new Constitution than by Kadalie's intention to introduce Europeans into official positions.⁽³⁾ In a retort to the bellicose Warner of Cape Town, one of the most passionate opponents of white intrusion, Kadalie pointed out that a narrow racial attitude was inconsistent with the policy of identification with the international labour movement. The debate raged all night⁽⁴⁾ and it is clear that Kadalie did not win his point, because the matter came up again at the National Council meeting of the following month

1. Ibid.

2. Kadalie "hoped the delegates would take the floor in a sane and comradely spirit, and waste no time in adopting the constitution. He said that the delegates should prove to the press that the heated discussion of the previous day was not due to hostility, but to a keen desire not to let errors creep into the wording and general spirit of the constitution." (Ibid).

3. Section 3(b) of the 1925 Constitution was dropped.

4. "He wanted a European private secretary, white girls as shorthand typists. All that was strange to us who knew his teachings so well. This question was debated the whole of a night at our Kimberley Conference, where through the voices of two lady delegates ... he was told that he went away a black man and came back a white man." (A.W.G. Champion: Mehlomadala, p.22 - English section).

However, the draft Constitution itself was accepted with only minor alterations.⁽¹⁾

Since 1925 the I.C.U. Constitution had undergone two revisions, in 1926 and 1927, presumably, though there is no record of any debate on the subject, at the Sixth (Johannesburg) and Seventh (Durban) Conferences. While neither of these revised Constitutions has survived, the nature of the changes made can readily be deduced.⁽²⁾ The 1926 revision seems to have made changes only in wording. In 1927, however, there were two major changes, both of which had the effect of increasing the power and extending the autonomy of A.W.G. Champion. For, on the one hand, the offices of General Secretary (filled previously by J. La Guma and then Sam Dunn) and Financial Secretary (vacant after the expulsion of E. Khaile) were abolished and their duties transferred to a new official, the Assistant National Secretary, Champion; and, on the other hand, Provincial Secretaries were given power to use General Fund money, which hitherto had to be centralised, for certain specific purposes,⁽³⁾ this provision, too, strengthening the hand of Champion, who retained a tight grip upon Natal affairs even after his promotion to Assistant, and then Acting, National Secretary.

1. The Workers' Herald 18th January, 1928.

2. Cf. Investigation and Report: Natal Provincial and Durban Offices of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (I.C.U.) 3rd April, 1928 (F 1928/23), p.3-4.

3. It is not known what these were. It appears that the earlier 1927 Constitution was not carefully framed, with the result that the rules governing the disposal of funds conflicted with one another. (Ibid, p.4).

One of the important changes of the December, 1927, Constitution was the dropping of the innovations of its immediate predecessor. The office of Financial Secretary was revived and given more important duties, taking over, in fact, much of the work of the old General Secretary.⁽¹⁾ There was no longer an Assistant National Secretary, but an officer called the Organising Secretary, who was second in command to the General Secretary, as the National Secretary was renamed.⁽²⁾ At the same time the centralisation of all funds was reimposed.⁽³⁾ Two other major differences were, firstly, the dropping of the I.W.W. preamble and, secondly, the introduction of proper sectionalisation of members. The sections into which the membership was divided remained the same - municipal, mining, building, agricultural, marine, transport, railway, factory and domestic workers - apart from a new reference to general workers, clerks and shop workers, and professional workers. Sectionalisation was provided for thus:-

"The membership shall be divided for record purposes according to the occupation or trade of the members, and such grouping may be used for calling together for consultation the members of the respective sections. Such trade consultation may be on the basis of the town in which the appropriate members reside, or may be representative of a trade from the provinces called together nationally to advise on trade policy." (4)

Only a careful scrutiny of the printed 1925 Constitution and a comparison of it with the printed December, 1927 Constitution can show the other differences between the later and earlier versions, since they seem to be slight. The objects of the Union remained much the same as before, including even the retention of clause (d), which

1. Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of Africa: Constitution and Rules; Revised and Adopted by Special Congress at Kimberley 16th to 21st December, 1927, Rule 7 - Officers of the Organisation (6).

2. Rule 7 (1).

3. Rule 10 - Funds of the Union (1).

4. Rule 3 - Constitution and Government (5).

permitted the I.C.U. "to take shares in any syndicate ... and to establish such commercial enterprises as may be deemed necessary."⁽¹⁾ The government of the Union also remained largely unaltered except for the changes in the titles and functions of the chief officers noted above and except for the strengthening of the power of the National Council.⁽²⁾ A National Council Sub-Committee was set up⁽³⁾ and it may be assumed that this was intended to be less ineffective than the National Council Executive Bureau. A larger number of Provincial Secretaries was envisaged and each of them was to be obliged to acquire "specialised knowledge of one or more of the main industrial sections enrolled in the Union."⁽⁴⁾ On the whole the new Constitution was not revolutionary and one wonders why it had been necessary for Kadalie and Grimshaw of the International Labour Office to have two all-night sessions working on it in Berlin and Geneva, as Kadalie's autobiography would have us believe to say nothing of the drafting said to have been done by Creech Jones.

After approving the new Constitution and deciding that the regular Conference should be held at Easter, 1928, the delegates left Kimberley on 10th December. They were in high spirits. The Johannesburg branch secretary produced a gramophone on the station and Kadalie and Maduna had "a little 'go' on the light fantastic" while they waited for the train, and there was much singing and

1. Rule 2 - Objects (j) (two) in the 1927 version.

2. Rule 5 - National Council.

3. Rule 5 (4).

4. Rule 7 (8) (c).

5. G. Kadalie: My Life, p.110-111, 129. It is more than likely that Kadalie has turned one event into two. There is a fuller examination of the 1927 Constitution in an appendix at the end of this chapter.

cheering.⁽¹⁾

The euphoria was short-lived. During the succeeding months a rift developed between Kadalie and Champion. There had been a long-standing grievance in Natal about money and dissatisfaction was brought to the surface by the Lenono case. The Union had to decide whether or not to assume responsibility for the costs that had been incurred. Another source of friction was the proposed importation of an adviser from England. Kadalie was under considerable pressure from Mrs. Lewis to hasten along the path of moderation and respectability. While bearing her interference with great patience, he was not so pliable as Mrs. Lewis seemed to suppose. When she wrote to him soon after the Kimberley Conference expressing her dismay at his opposition to the visit to the De Beers Mines and discreetly showing her concern about the activities of the I.C.U. in the farming areas, an intervention that could only do harm to what she thought was the happy innocence of the rural Africans, whom she hoped would be left unspoilt as long as possible, Kadalie was non-committal, confining himself to evasive platitudes and did not excuse his refusal of the De Beers invitation.⁽²⁾ Meanwhile Mrs. Lewis was busy negotiating for assistance from the Carnegie Trust of New York, which seemed favourably disposed to helping the I.C.U. to purchase a sports ground.

The most pressing fear of Mrs. Lewis remained the Communists. For, it seemed to her, they were again infiltrating the I.C.U.

1. The Workers' Herald 18th January, 1928.

2. C. Kadalie to Mrs. Lewis 1st February, 1928 (B/Wits).

It was only during Kadalie's absence in Europe that she became aware of the connection of C.F. Glass with the Union and, quite wrongly, she supposed that he had been introduced into it by Champion. The fact that Glass had done some useful work on the tangled finances of the I.C.U. did not weigh with her. She wanted him out.

Mrs. Lewis was also unhappy about the I.C.U.'s worsening relations with the Government. The advice of Creech Jones to pursue a policy of restraint in public speeches was not allowed in any way to cramp the established oratorical style of the I.C.U. leaders. There were some arrests for breaches of the Native Administration Act, culminating in the arrest of Kadalie in April. A sympathetic magistrate acquitted the General Secretary in May, but his defence imposed an additional financial burden upon the slender resources of the Union.

From the deliberations of the National Council at its meeting of January, 1928, in Johannesburg it would be difficult to guess that it was discussing the policy of an organisation fast sliding into bankruptcy.⁽¹⁾ Certainly there was some awareness of the financial problem. The General Secretary put forward proposals for curtailing expenditure and there was talk of raising money to buy land for ejected farm workers by borrowing from the branches. Kadalie was urged to tour the Orange Free State branches to try and get money. It was obviously a forlorn hope. Abel Ngcobo of Natal thought that his people would be willing to contribute towards buying farms and

1. Agenda of the National Council, First Session of 1928 (F 1928/2); Minutes of National Council 6th - 9th January, 1928 (F 1928/1).

that they would like to discuss the matter with Kadalie, and this seemed a better proposition than touring the Orange Free State, where 'Mote said, only three branches had any reserve funds and where "if we went to collect money now from the people they would require to know what had become of the 5/- collected for the Pass Laws", a reference to the levy of 1927. Kadalie was most reluctant to undertake a tour but, when the proposal was put to the vote, he found himself in a minority of one. As Mzazi put it:

"No one else but the General Secretary could undertake this tour ... At Kimberley Chief Dhlamini requested the Union to assist the people in buying land and said that his people were willing to contribute all they had towards purchasing land. The General Secretary stated that there was plenty of money at Headquarters in the Union and now if someone else went to the people and told them that the General Secretary was wrong it would create a very bad impression." (1)

In spite of the acknowledged gravity of the financial situation there was still serious discussion of sending Kadalie to Geneva again in 1928, of providing him with a private secretary and each Provincial Secretary with a clerk, and of buying a car for Head Office. Moreover, there were still hopes of buying a printing press and the Workers' Hall, though discussion was again deferred. Several new senior appointments were made. The appointment of Gladstone Kali to the position of Research Secretary, already made by Kadalie, was confirmed, though not without some opposition, while Phoofolo (who Champion alleged had proved incompetent as a bookkeeper) was appointed Provincial Secretary for South-West Transvaal and Maduna (translated from Eastern Province, to which Rakamakoe was appointed) Provincial Secretary for North-East Transvaal, the two halves of the territory

1. This conflicts with the report in The Workers' Herald 18th January, 1928 of what Kadalie said to Chief Dhlamini.

that they would like to discuss the matter with Kadalie, and this seemed a better proposition than touring the Orange Free State, where, 'Mote said, only three branches had any reserve funds and where "if we went to collect money now from the people they would require to know what had become of the 5/- collected for the Pass Laws", a reference to the levy of 1927. Kadalie was most reluctant to undertake a tour but, when the proposal was put to the vote, he found himself in a minority of one. As Mzazi put it:

"No one else but the General Secretary could undertake this tour ... At Kimberley Chief Dhlamini requested the Union to assist the people in buying land and said that his people were willing to contribute all they had towards purchasing land. The General Secretary stated that there was plenty of money at Headquarters in the Union and now if someone else went to the people and told them that the General Secretary was wrong it would create a very bad impression." (1)

In spite of the acknowledged gravity of the financial situation there was still serious discussion of sending Kadalie to Geneva again in 1928, of providing him with a private secretary and each Provincial Secretary with a clerk, and of buying a car for Head Office. Moreover, there were still hopes of buying a printing press and the Workers' Hall, though discussion was again deferred. Several new senior appointments were made. The appointment of Gladstone Kali to the position of Research Secretary, already made by Kadalie, was confirmed, though not without some opposition, while Phoofolo (who Champion alleged had proved incompetent as a bookkeeper) was appointed Provincial Secretary for South-West Transvaal and Maduna (translated from Eastern Province, to which Rakamakoe was appointed) Provincial Secretary for North-East Transvaal, the two halves of the territory

1. This conflicts with the report in The Workers' Herald 18th January, 1928 of what Kadalie said to Chief Dhlamini.

of 'Mbeki, who, already suspended, was now dismissed for habitual drunkenness. Modiakgotla was moved from Griqualand West to Kroonstad as District Secretary and 'Mote told to go back to Bloemfontein, which he should never have left.

Inevitably there was wrangling. Champion and 'Mote clashed early in the proceedings and later there was a quarrel over a problem that had arisen at Kroonstad, where the residents of the location had been persuaded, either by themselves or by 'Mote, to resist a rise in location rates, refusing to pay while the I.C.U. contested the increase in the courts. When the case, having been taken to the Supreme Court, was lost, the residents turned to the now impoverished Union for assistance in paying arrears, and, unable or unwilling to meet the demands of the City Council, were being ejected from their houses, which were being pulled down.⁽¹⁾ Kadalie, Champion and 'Mote all disclaimed responsibility for the fiasco. No help was offered to the distressed householders; it was simply agreed that the National Council Sub-Committee should investigate. Another source of dispute was Kadalie's proposal, as part of his plan for reducing expenditure, to insist upon National Council sanction for all major litigation. This encountered strong opposition from Champion, who said that it would be impossible under such circumstances to carry on in Natal, and some opposition from Modiakgotla. To the chagrin of the General Secretary, who denounced its unconstitutionality, exemption was granted to Natal. Then there was a row over the

1. Cape Times 21st January, 1928; Minutes of National Council November, 1927 (F 1927/124); Minutes of National Council January, 1928 (F 1928/1).

fixing of salaries for officers under the new Constitution. Kadalie became enraged when the matter was referred to a sub-committee and the National Council adjourned to permit this to discuss the matter at once. He became more angry still over the appointment of a private secretary for himself. It was not that the appointment was rejected (and it was even agreed that he could have a European), but that the salary fixed was absurdly low in his view - £8 a month, of which £5 was to come from a reduction in his own salary. £8 a month was no use for bringing a girl from England, which is what he had in mind.

The major row was over the Lenono case. There was a preliminary skirmish over a libel suit brought by Rev. John Dube against Champion's paper Udibi lwase Afrika. Kadalie opposed a request from Champion for the Durban branch to raise money for the case on the ground that Udibi was not the Union's official paper.⁽¹⁾ He also insisted that the I.C.U. had no responsibility for the costs of the Lenono case, which was, he said, entirely Champion's personal business, and he rebuked the National Council for not - with the exception of de Norman - taking an interest in the matter during his absence in Europe. Champion was deeply offended, declaring that the case involved the welfare of the Union, which Ncwana and Nyombolo had been bent on subverting, and that Kadalie had agreed to the suit and accompanied him to Cowley's office in connection with it. "He was surprised," he said, "that his colleagues the General Secretary had deserted him." The National Council agreed to authorise the

1. Champion settled out of court. (A.M. Ngcobo to A.W.B. Champion 30th January, 1928, F 1928/5).

payment of the Defendant's costs in the Lenono case,⁽¹⁾ a sum of £219.83, though Kadalie and someone else (perhaps 'Mote, who was smarting from the unsympathetic treatment accorded his request for money for Kroonstad) objected. Champion was granted two months' leave.⁽²⁾ No disciplinary action against him was yet contemplated; Kadalie had appointed an auditor to go through the Durban books, but there was no reference to the Tatham judgment.

Less than a week afterwards the Executive Council of the South African Trades Union Congress met with the executive of its affiliated unions to discuss the application of the I.C.U. to affiliate status.⁽³⁾ Although the application was received by no means unsympathetically, a most cogent argument against accepting it was put by A.A. Moore of the Reduction Workers Association. Disregarding the advice of Creech Jones to escape from the belief that mere size was a sign of strength, the I.C.U. had applied for affiliation on the basis of a membership of 100,000. As Moore put it:

"He challenged the statement that the application of the I.C.U. for affiliation was not a sincere one. He thought it was, but at the same time we could not grant the application on the basis suggested as 100,000 members would swamp the rest of the affiliated unions. It was a question of domination or control which was involved."

He was, however, in favour of some sort of consultation. Another speaker argued that, if the I.C.U. were accepted, the white unions would simply withdraw from the Congress. Moore's point of view

1. C. Cowley to C. Kadalie 17th February, 1928 (F 1928/5).

2. A.W.G. Champion: Mehlomadala, p.5 (Translation, p.3).

3. South African Trades Union Congress: Minutes of Meeting of the National Executive Council with the Executives of the Affiliated Unions 15th January, 1928 (B/UCT).

formed the substance of the motion that was introduced: "the time is not opportune to accept the affiliation of the I.C.U. but^{the T.U.C.}/is of the opinion that consultations between the two bodies from time to time must have a beneficial effect to both sides." Some argued against any contact whatsoever, others wanted the question postponed, others again - only three, including Bennie Weinbren of the Launderers, Cleaners and Dyers Union - wanted the application accepted. All, however, were, not unnaturally, actuated by a desire to safeguard the interests of white workers, even Weinbren.

"He wanted to know how the European workers were to put their house in order if they ignored the native workers. The natives were in the great majority and it was wrong to ignore them. In time of strike the natives could with the members of the Officials unions (sic) run the mines. In the dyeing trade, which was a skilled job the native was replacing European dyers ... the reason being of course the lower rates the native would accept. The only remedy was to organise them and raise their status."

One of the representatives of the South African Mine Workers' Union put forward an extreme point of view reminiscent of 1922.

"The native would undersell the European even if the I.C.U. became affiliated ... The natives were savages, barbarians. Kadalie is not there to organise the natives for their own benefit but for the capitalists, which was indicated by the expulsion of the Communists from the I.C.U."

All those present, however, with two exceptions were in favour of consultation, because it was thought to be realistic to come to terms with the I.C.U.'s existence.

It appears that the South African Trades Union Congress, solemnly debating the wisdom of admitting the I.C.U. into its ranks, was unaware that it was in fact a hollow shell. For some months yet the leaders themselves, national and local, were spared the truth - or could not face it. Before the collapse they staged one more of their much-loved set pieces, another African Labour Congress.

The Eighth Annual Conference of the I.C.U., which was held in Bloemfontein at Easter, 1928, would, so The Workers' Herald thought,⁽¹⁾ "go down to history as an epoch-making event". It heralded the "birth of a new nation". This euphoria was induced by the very cordial relations that were established with the African National Congress, which happened to hold its Annual Conference at the same time and place. I.C.U. and A.N.C. agreed to co-operate "on a basis of broad National issues."

"The importance of this step cannot be minimised, opening, as it does, a new status in Native life in South Africa. Both these organisations represent all non-European races, and although they differ in minor respects, the leaders and followers of these bodies have realised the need of co-operation on all matters of National policy.

"It used to be a theory that the Natives, composed of various tribes, still adhere to old feuds coupled with present-day jealousies, and could therefore not work together. We admit that there was some ground for this belief, and there were those, among Europeans, who urged that a policy of 'divide et impera' would be the most successful one from the European point of view. Those who thought this had their belief shattered by the Bloemfontein decision of the I.C.U. and the African National Congress, who, as we have said, unanimously decided to work together in future for 'Bantu National Purpose'." (2)

The rapprochement began with the decision of the "Upper House" of the A.N.C., the Council of Chiefs, to send fraternal greetings to the I.C.U. Conference and to propose, with a view to co-operation, a joint meeting of the Executive Committee of the A.N.C. and the National Council of the I.C.U. The invitation was accepted and the meeting took place on the afternoon of Easter Monday, 9th April.

1. 12th May, 1928.

2. The Workers' Herald 12th May, 1928. The paper's editorial continues: "It would be to the good of all non-European races if such organisations as the 'Bantu Union', the 'A.P.O.', the 'Afrikaner Bond' all worked together." Yet the I.C.U. had expended little charity upon the Non-European Conference held at Kimberley the previous year.

The outcome was the adoption of a resolution, proposed by Kadalie of the I.C.U. and seconded by R.V. Selope Thema of the A.N.C., agreeing that

"co-operation between the Congress and the I.C.U. in matters of national policy, namely, the Government's Native Bills and the Pass Laws, is essential if the political and economic progress of our people is to be secured." (1)

To facilitate this co-operation the A.N.C. repudiated its association with the Communist Party, "which of late has openly identified itself with the Congress." (2)

The good understanding arrived at with the A.N.C. was almost the only solace that the I.C.U. derived from the Bloemfontein Conference, and even that source of comfort was illusory. In the succeeding months the I.C.U. was preoccupied with its internal problems.

The Conference, which was late in starting because the A.N.C. was occupying the hall in the Batho Location, was able to borrow it for a delayed opening on Saturday 7th April and was fortunate in having for the rest of its proceedings a hall placed at its disposal by the Anglican bishop of Bloemfontein, who also consented to speak. J.G. Gumbs, presiding for the last time, (3) urged the delegates to be "calm and grave ... to show by their behaviour that they were in deep thoughts, and show those who ruled them that they were capable of ruling themselves". (4) Bishop Carey

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. He died in 1929.

4. The Workers' Herald 12th May, 1928.

"was indeed grateful to have the opportunity of speaking to such a distinguished gathering of the working class. In a most humorous, yet Christianly speech, he told Congress that he had been a labour man himself in England ... He was a friend of the Bantu in their legitimate aspirations. He had found the Bantu a gentleman by nature ...

"A man was a fool who said that the Bantu had not the same right to form trade unions as any other people in South Africa. He believed in fair play and justice for all ... He knew he would be the most unpopular man in the Free State. He stood here to suffer. The Whites would say he was giving them away to the Blacks, and the latter would say he didn't go far enough.

"The Bishop repeated that he was with them in their fair and reasonable demands. But, he added, if their demands were unfair and unreasonable he would resist them as strenuously as he would help them otherwise ..." (1)

The Location Superintendent also spoke, claiming that in Bloemfontein relations between workers and employers were good, but warning the Conference that "the Whites would not submit to methods of dictation".⁽²⁾ He also appealed to the I.C.U. to "stem the influx of Natives into Bloemfontein."⁽³⁾ E.K. Nhlapo, acting Provincial Secretary of the Orange Free State, followed and, unimpressed by the conciliatory words of the white speakers, immediately struck a harsh note. The Free State, he said, was no free state, but a slave state, because

"here we can own no land. We are still sjambokked like dogs, and ejected from locations simply because we are members of the I.C.U." (4)

Such sentiments were endorsed even by the moderate Senior Vice-President, A.M. Jabavu. While expressing the thanks of the Conference to the Bishop of Bloemfontein and paying tribute to the way in which the city ran its location, he spoke of the "economic strangulation" and the land hunger that drove blacks into the towns, and he remarked

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

tartly upon the absence of the Mayor and Deputy-Mayor, so that it was necessary "to place Bloemfontein and Durban in the same category in regard to their organisation". (1)

The only business conducted on Easter Saturday was the adoption of an emergency resolution introduced by the General Secretary, Clements Kadalie, who blithely prophesied that the I.C.U. would have by the end of the year a million members. The emergency resolution, sending fraternal greetings to the South African Trade Union Congress meeting at Johannesburg and pledging the I.C.U. "to work for the unification of all trade unions, irrespective of colour or nationality, into one trade union congress of all workers", was, like the million membership prophecy, a left-over from the Durban Conference of the previous year. Kadalie emphasised the support that the I.C.U. enjoyed from the international trade union movement and expressed the belief that eventually the S.A.T.U.C. would have to agree to the affiliation of the I.C.U.⁽²⁾ R. de Norman, who seconded the motion, was yet more emphatic. After repudiating any suggestion that the I.C.U. was "racial and anti-White", he claimed:

"Instead of them knocking at the door of the S.A.T.U. (sic) the time had come (sic) when the white workers would have to knock at the door of the I.C.U. Theirs was not a purely Native, but a workers' organisation." (3)

Proceedings on Easter Monday opened somewhat sourly with an enquiry into the financial standing of the branches represented at the Conference and of the members of the National Council. The latter were cleared, but the credentials of some of the delegates were

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

challenged. One difficulty was that the new Constitution, five months after it had been adopted by the Union, was still not in print and some delegates argued with justice that there should be an opportunity given for studying it before it was strictly enforced.

The subject of the first big debate of the Conference was the position of farm labourers. The basis of discussion was the relevant section of an Economic and Political Programme for 1928 that had been drawn up by the General Secretary for presentation to the Conference with the aim of preventing for the future "the dissemination of conflicting politics" (sic). It betrays the influence of C.F. Glass, especially its introduction, and a somewhat disingenuous attitude towards political issues.

"Opponents of the I.C.U. have frequently asserted that the Organisation is not a trade union in the sense that the term is generally understood in South Africa, but that it is a kind of pseudo-political body. The ground on which this assertion has been based is the fact that the I.C.U. has concentrated its attention on matters in which the issues involved have not been 'purely economic', whilst these 'purely economic' issues have been very largely neglected.

"The new constitution ... definitely establishes the I.C.U. as a trade union, albeit one of native workers ... At the same time it must be clearly understood that we have no intention of copying the stupid and futile 'non-political' attitude of our white contemporaries. As Karl Marx said, every economic question is, in the last analysis, a political question also, and we must recognise that in neglecting to concern ourselves with current politics, in leaving the political machines to the unchallenged control of our class enemies, we are rendering a disservice to those tens of thousands of our members who are groaning under oppressive laws ... At the present stage of our development it is inevitable that our activities should be almost of an agitational character, for we are not recognised as citizens in our own country, being almost entirely disfranchised and debarred from exercising a say in state affairs closely affecting our lives and welfare." (1)

The Programme, rather late in the day, paid unprecedented

1. Economic and Political Programme for 1928 (F 1928/64; The Workers' Herald 12th May, 1928).

attention to rural grievances, "for the reason that the greater proportion of our membership comprises rural workers, landless peasants, whose dissatisfaction with conditions is with good reason greater than that of the workers in urban areas." It dealt with ten issues.

1. Wages. Branches should first endeavour to negotiate with employers, employers' organisations and farmers' associations and then, in the event of failure, invoke the machinery established by the Wage Act. The immediate aim should be a minimum wage of £5 per month, plus food and housing for rural workers.

"The reasonableness of this claim cannot be disputed by any one. The attainment of this admittedly low rate, which it must be said few native workers are receiving, is not to be regarded as an end in itself, but as a stepping stone to the ultimate achievement of the full economic rights of the native workers."

2. Hours. The aim should be a maximum working day of 8 hours and a maximum working week of 5½ days.

"This demand will have the support of all right-thinking and justice-loving people, and members who refuse to exceed this working-time should be given every possible support and encouragement."

3. Illegal practices by employers. These included withholding wages and seizing stock. They "should be reported to the local Magistrate and Native Affairs Department, with fullest particulars. Any refusal by these officials to deal with complaints, or failure to secure satisfaction for the member or members concerned should be reported to the Head Office of the Organisation for submission to the higher authorities."

4. Franchise. All I.C.U. meetings should condemn the proposed disfranchisement of African workers in the Cape and demand rather the extension of the franchise and a nation-wide petition should be organised in protest against the Bill then before Parliament.

"In the event of the Bill being passed and the franchise being withdrawn a protest should be made by means of a mammoth petition calling into question the necessity and legality of taxing and legislating for a section of the population and citizens without granting them the same representation as provided for the Europeans, at the same time asking for tangible and unbiased reasons why the Natives should not refuse to pay taxes without representation."

5. Pass Laws - "a legal expression of Native enslavement, corresponding with the dark days of Tzarist Russia".

"We would propose that the Government be petitioned to suspend the Pass Laws for, say, a period of six months. If, during that period, it is found that there has been no increase of lawlessness among the Natives, but that they are just as law-abiding with out passes as with them, then the Government should be asked to repeal the Pass Laws in their entirety, as there will no longer be any reason or justification, either real or imaginary, for their continuance.

"In the event of the Government refusing to comply with such a petition, Congress should fix a day of national protest against the Pass Laws, to be marked by mass demonstrations at which all Natives should be asked to hand in their passports, the same to be burned in public, by the demonstrations. In addition, those assembled should be pledged by solemn resolution to refuse to carry any further passports or to give any further recognition to the Pass Laws."

6. Land.

"The total area of land set aside for exclusive native occupation in the Union is notoriously inadequate. Parliament should be petitioned through one or more of its members to increase the Native reserves so as to make provision for the landless Native farmers. The assistance of labour organisations overseas should be invoked in this matter. In addition, an agitation should be started against the laws prohibiting native squatting."

7. Free speech.

"Vigorous propaganda must be carried on against those provisions in the Native Administration Act which place restrictions on the right of free speech. Ostensibly these provisions are designed to prevent the stirring-up of hostility between the white and black races. Actually they are intended to limit the opportunities for trade union propaganda and organisation among the native workers. These provisions must therefore be strenuously fought against and their legality challenged where wrongful arrests are carried out. In this connection, no opportunity must be lost of stressing the fact that the I.C.U. is not an anti-European organisation, and that where it has occasion to criticise Europeans it is on grounds of their actions (usually as employers of labour) towards the natives and not on account of the colour of their skins."

8. Propaganda.

"Members must be kept fully informed of the activities of the organisation, and of all happenings affecting their interests. For this purpose regular members' meetings must be called by Branch Secretaries, and the speeches made thereat must not, as heretofore, be of a vague or general agitational character, but must deal with concrete and immediate problems. Every endeavour must be made to stimulate, and to this end questions and discussion by the audience must be encouraged.

"The 'Workers' Herald', our official organ, must be further popularised among the members. If every member bought the paper its circulation could be easily quadrupled and more. The paper could be made to possess an interest for each district if Branch Secretaries would take the trouble to contribute notes concerning local happenings with their comments thereon."

9. New recruits.

"There are large numbers of native workers to whom the I.C.U. is scarcely known. I refer to the workers on the Witwatersrand gold mines, the Natal coal mines and the Railways. Branch Secretaries in these areas should make every endeavour to rope these men in as members of the I.C.U., as they would be an undoubted source of strength. The good work commenced some years ago among Dock workers has unfortunately been discontinued very largely. Renewed efforts must be made during the ensuing year to bring the strayed ones back to the fold."

10. Representation on public bodies. I.C.U. candidates should be put up for the Cape Provincial Council in those constituencies where there was "a possibility of securing a fair vote at least ... Propaganda must be the main consideration, although every effort must be made to secure the return of any candidate put up."⁽¹⁾

Point 1 of the Programme - wages - was discussed on Easter Monday. Keable 'Mote began by giving his opinion that five pounds a month for farm labourers was a preposterous wage that no farmer would ever pay, and cited farm workers in the north-eastern Free State who, on ten shillings a month, were as well off as town workers paid ten pounds a month, and, in some instances, were permitted to keep forty head of cattle each. This information met

1. Ibid.

with some scepticism - "Loud cries: 'That's a confounded lie'"(1) - and the next speaker, from Natal, pointing out that, in his province, many farmers paid half a crown a month or even no wages at all, very sensibly remarked, in effect, upon the difficulty of making generalisations for the entire country. What did emerge from the debate was that the delegates could quote examples of farm conditions within their own experience, but that the Conference did not have before it a comprehensive body of statistics in the light of which a reasonable minimum wage could be determined. Nevertheless, Theo B. Lujiza insisted that it was desirable for the I.C.U. to make an unequivocal demand for a minimum wage so that white people would know exactly what the blacks wanted. William Smith, the Financial Secretary, and Simon Elias disagreed, arguing that a minimum wage for agricultural labourers was premature and that a demand for one would only lead to wholesale evictions. As Smith said:

"There were thousands in Natal who would agree to work on farms for the bare privilege of residing there. If a minimum wage was insisted on at this juncture those who demanded this could easily be replaced. The I.C.U.'s business was to cut off supplies and create a demand. This could only be done by purchasing farms for Natives. If this was done the minimum wage would right itself." (2)

Robert Sello of Heilbron was loudly applauded when he urged

"reasonable farmers to agree to meet the I.C.U. in a round table conference. By agreeing to this the farmers would not degrade themselves, but would rise in the estimation of the whole civilised world." (3)

Finally, after R. de Norman had reminded the Conference that agricultural workers and domestic servants were excluded from the working of the Wage Act and suggested that it was futile to insist upon an agricultural minimum wage before the scope of the Act was widened, an impatient delegate from Natal, who unsuccessfully tried to move

1. The Workers' Herald 12th May, 1928.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

a vote of no confidence in the National Council, acidly observed that "the minimum wage question had been discussed year in and year out, thus wasting unnecessary time (sic) over the matter."⁽¹⁾

The next subject of debate was the merits of written contracts, whether their advantage as a safeguard for the employee was outweighed by the disadvantage of the restraints associated with them.⁽²⁾ Champion, who said that it was suspicious that farmers' associations had always refused to discuss the question with him,⁽³⁾ continued,

"People who worked under contract were placed in the position of convicts, and could be arrested at any time should they absent themselves from work - even as a result of illness. On the mines contract labourers were compelled to eat what they were given, and to sleep where they were told; all that was due to the written contract. There were delegates present who, on their return, may find their passes at the pass offices, and that meant gaol, just because they over-stayed their leave for a few days." ⁽⁴⁾

Contracts were also opposed by Mogaecho of Bloemfontein, who thought the best protection of the workers lay in the establishment of labour bureaux, and John Mancoe of Winburg, who rudely, if irrelevantly, alleged that "I.C.U. secretaries wasted time in big towns - eating puddings, and the like - instead of going to the rural areas and organise (sic) the real workers of the country."⁽⁵⁾ In favour of written contracts was Joe Kokozela of Johannesburg, who thought

1. Ibid.

2. The report in The Workers' Herald does not make it clear when this debate took place, but it was probably on the Tuesday.

3. "Comrade Keable 'Mote (O.F.S.) here complained that the Chairman gave Champion too much latitude because Champion was considered the 'holy angel' of the house he was allowed to speak after the motion had been placed on the table." (The Workers' Herald 12th May, 1928).

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

that they did provide workers with a safeguard against unscrupulous employers. A motion supporting written contracts for farm labourers was carried.

The proceedings of the Conference were interrupted by a special meeting of the National Council to discuss, as it was given out, the policy of the Union with regard to the franchise and the next general election. In all probability, however, it was at this meeting that the case of Allison Champion was discussed. By this time the auditors who had examined the I.C.U. books in Durban had made their report. This agreed with the criticisms of the Tatham judgment and recommended a commission of inquiry into the whole financial administration of the I.C.U. and into "the facts revealed in this report with regard to Champion."⁽¹⁾ The National Council decided to appoint such a commission and to suspend Champion pending its report. This decision was upheld by the Conference, which met in camera on Thursday and Friday, 12th and 13th April. It must have been during this secret session, too, that the Union endorsed the policy of bringing out an English adviser and got rid of Glass, whom Kadalie wanted to keep.⁽²⁾ Champion, who was ill, retired to his home at Inanda.⁽³⁾

On Saturday morning the Conference continued in open session and a debate upon the purchase of farms for evicted I.C.U. members was opened by the General Secretary. He had little to say of comfort. Land was not easy to obtain. Several offers of farms in Natal and

1. Investigation and Report 3rd April, 1928 (F 1928/23), p.32.

2. A.W.G. Champion: Mehlomadala, p.4 (Translation, p.2).

3. Some suspected poisoning. (N.J. Mcunu to A.W.G. Champion 25th April, 1928, F 1928/30).

Zululand had had to be turned down because they were not within a "Native area" and government permission for their purchase was withheld. This, however, was far from being the greatest of the I.C.U.'s difficulties. Of more importance was its bankruptcy. Although after the National Council meeting of January Kadalie had made a round of the branches and succeeded in raising a loan of £200, the only reasonable priced farm which, being within a "Native area" (in the Harding district of Natal), was readily available required a deposit alone of £800 and a total expenditure of more than £2,000. Kadalie concluded optimistically that

"he was certain the people themselves would substantially contribute towards the purchase price. As a matter of fact many were even now prepared to contribute livestock." (1)

Reports from delegates, however, showed that the situation was beyond the remedy of the purchase of a farm or two.

Mashaba (Wasbank, Natal): "... thousands were under notice of being evicted in June, and will therefore be absolutely homeless."

Mancoe: "... in the Free State many people were fleeing about (sic), and thousands in his district (Winburg) have been asking him where they should go."

A.B. Ngcobo (Durban): "There was no time for resolutions now; practical steps were required because the people were homeless and starving especially in Northern Natal."

Z.C. Ngubane (Natal) "said that too many promises were made during the past, and those who resided in towns did not realise the gravity of the position in rural areas ... In his district also, all have been served with notices to quit the farms in June." (2)

proposed

The only solution to the problem/by these delegates was that branches should be empowered to collect money themselves and buy land. Ngubane observed:

1. The Workers' Herald 12th May, 1928.

2. Ibid.

"He did not like to go back to his branches with nothing to report, so he asked for authority to go back to the people and ask them to contribute towards a farm. He knew of over thirty well-to-do men in his district who were willing and able to make up a substantial contribution." (1)

The debate developed into a discussion on the constitutional propriety and practical desirability of branches collecting money and entering into contracts. Champion came in for some criticism, even from Abel Ngcobo, though he put forward ill-health as a possible excuse for his leader's failure to accomplish anything. Kadalie, with some sarcasm, observed that, if Champion had achieved nothing while he was Acting National Secretary, it was not because he had spent his time at Head Office. He himself did not object to branches collecting money and negotiating for the purchase of land, provided that Head Office was kept informed and duplicates of receipts for sums collected were sent in. The implication was that the National Council would be responsible for actual purchases made. This flexibility did not commend itself to the constitutional purists - Sello and Modiakgotla, who insisted upon the centralisation of all funds - nor to those who evidently did not trust the branches, Kokozela for example, who said that the

"moment we embarked on a land-buying scheme we invited the attention of the Government, therefore we must keep records and accounts that will stand the light of day. Therefore very responsible, able and trustworthy officials should be at the head of affairs, so as to devise clear and scrupulous methods." (2)

This brought a protest from Herbert Msane of Greytown, Natal and an angry interjection from John Mancoe.

"Comrade Herbert Msane: It seems that the last speaker suggests that moneys would not be safe in the hands of Natal officials. It was wrong to cast such insinuations. It now seemed that Provincial Secretaries were to be made mere boys who were compelled to refer every mortal thing to Head Office. (Uproar)" "Comrade John Mancoe (Amidst uproar): Mr. Chairman, I would not reply to a fool according to this folly."

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

Another Natal delegate, from Howick, complained that money collected in Natal for purchase of farms had been used for other purposes, and this in turn aroused indignation. As a compromise Kadalie suggested a land scheme fund administered by Head Office but with separate provincial accounts. This did not satisfy the Natal delegates (and also Simon Elias), who wanted provincial control of money collected for this purpose, and in the end it was they who carried the day. All land scheme funds were to be sent to Provincial Secretaries and administered by provincial committees. The delegates had taken leave of reality. President Gumbs spoke more truly than he realised: "I think sufficient hot air has been thrown off."⁽¹⁾

Considerable, and understandable, indignation was generated by the next item on the agenda, the damage done to I.C.U. property by white hooligans in Weenen, Krantzkop and Greytown. Kadalie compared the trifling fines, ranging from one to five pounds, imposed upon the culprits with the heavy bail demanded in the case of two I.C.U. officials recently charged under the Native Administration Act, 'Mote and Dumah. He claimed that the I.C.U. had lost £200 at Greytown, and "a considerable sum of money, as well as personal effects and office furniture" at Krantzkop.⁽²⁾ He went on to recommend a civil action for damages. One or two of the delegates, however, were not satisfied that the Head Office officials had acted with sufficient vigour. They should, it was said, have raised the matter with the magistrate concerned or with the Attorney-General in order to press for a more serious charge (arson instead of public violence) or a

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

more severe sentence. De Norman remarked - though it is difficult to establish the relevance - that he "thought that the time had arrived to educate our men. At present thousands of pounds were spent unnecessarily on lawyers for work that could have been done by union officials." Kadalie lost his temper: "It seems that some of these critics were looking for jobs at Head Office."⁽¹⁾ He apologised, but pointed out that Head Office had in fact written to the Minister of Justice before the case was taken to court. A resolution was unanimously passed calling upon the Government to make an investigation.

There followed a dispute between militants (Kadalie, Dumah, Mancoe) who wanted to re-open the raided offices at once and who volunteered to go and do it in the interests of "freedom and justice" and moderates who thought that nothing should be done until after the civil action contemplated by the National Council (Nolutshungu) and that to "adopt mob law in retaliation is very wrong, as two wrongs do not constitute a right" (Sello). Herbert Msane, the Greytown Secretary, said

"he was glad to see so many willing to sacrifice their lives in order to open these offices. He had a very narrow escape (sic) with his life. It was a veritable war declared against the I.C.U. on that fateful night. It was now time for the higher officials to come to the fore and establish order. The position was very serious, and did not require rash acts, as some people were determined that these offices will not be opened ..."

Which earned him a gibe from Mzazi:

"... Msane was too much concerned about his precious life. They had every right to organise the workers in their own land, and if Msane was afraid let him stand down, and the I.C.U. will get another official to replace him. (Laughter)". ⁽²⁾

There was no meeting on Saturday 14th April. It was pouring

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

with rain and neither hall was available. The Conference, when it met for the last time on Sunday, was thinly attended. It discussed the pass laws and municipal by-laws, which had been used by local authorities to impede I.C.U. activity by withholding residence permits from its officials. The usual divergence of view between extremist and moderate emerged. The Pretoria delegate expressed surprise that "they were still talking about resolutions. In Pretoria they have already started to put words into action, and many of them have thrown away their passes." The Port Elizabeth delegate disagreed:

They "were going rather too fast. There should be no half-hearted measures in this matter, therefore they should first of all get the support of the whole country behind this movement. To hurry and fail is both dangerous and undignified. Let them fix an emancipation day so as to get united action."⁽¹⁾

Mancoe "agreed that the rank and file were ready for direct action, but were only waiting for word from the leaders. Maduna told them last Sunday to do away with passes, yet they were now still discussing."⁽²⁾ Delegates, however, were reminded by de Norman that they were pledged to co-operation with the African National Congress and moved that the I.C.U. National Council be authorised to meet the Executive Council of the A.N.C. and this was unanimously agreed to.

For the by-laws Kadalie advised that the best remedy was to have an I.C.U. official test the law by entering a location without a permit. As he picturesquely put it, "they were allowing too many of these ultra-vires phantoms to stalk rampant through the land destroying all signs of justice."⁽³⁾ There was criticism from

1..Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

left and right.

Simon Elias "was not in favour of wasting money in litigation. 'Let us throw these ugly things away.'" (1)

Joe Kokzela: "Comrades, you have to go slow in these matters. Municipalities argued that the locations were their private property, and even Europeans were arrested in these locations after nine o'clock. Further, Municipal bye-laws were covered by Acts of Parliament, and he believed that some of these regulations had already been put to the test during the past." (2)

In the end the Conference unanimously passed a resolution proposed by 'Mote:

"That this Congress of the I.C.U., having heard with consternation the refusal of various Municipalities, notably in the Free State, to issue lodgers' and visitors' permits to I.C.U. officials and Branch Secretaries, since the I.C.U. in this respect can be recognised as an employer of labour, resolves to instruct the National Council to take legal opinion with a view to instituting a test case." (3)

On Sunday evening there was some discussion of "matters of internal interest" and then, with the singing of Nkosi Sikelel'i Afrika and the Red Flag, the Conference dissolved.

In the months following the Bloemfontein Conference the I.C.U. underwent a series of upheavals.

Although it is apparent that Kadalie, in aiding and abetting Champion's suspension, was unaware that he was stirring up a hornet's nest, it must have been clear to him that he was challenging a formidable opponent, and his reasons for committing himself to so risky a course of action are a matter of speculation. The most obvious reason, and not less likely to be true for being so, was that the I.C.U. could not afford to give the impression that it

1. Oddly, Keable 'Mote "advised constitutional action".

2. The Workers' Herald 12th May, 1928.

3. Ibid.

condoned a defalcation of such proportions by one of its principal officers. However, it is also obvious that Kadalie had little choice but to accept the explanation thought up by his European supporters for the crisis confronting the Union. This is how Mrs. Lewis saw the situation.

"A very great set-back was given to the I.C.U. during Kadalie's absence at Geneva last year by the misdeeds of the man who took his place as secretary for the time being. It was this man Champion, a Natal native, who (1) introduced a very dangerous man into the office as bookkeeper and general factotum, a Russian Jew of a virulent political type who has wasted no opportunities of working for his crowd, and discovering everything possible about the I.C.U. (2) He (Champion) used I.C.U. funds for his own purposes and ran up huge debts to lawyers as well, leaving the I.C.U. in a very precarious financial state which Kadalie has had to struggle against ever since his return six months ago." (1)

If he chose not to put the blame at Champion's door, who, or what, else could be held responsible? When he sailed for Europe, he left behind an apparently prosperous and expanding organisation; he returned to a dwindling membership and empty coffers. If the damage had not been done in his absence, if Kadalie had in fact been in a position to know quite well the real state of the I.C.U., then he had deceived himself and his friends, scarcely an admission he would care to make. Another possible explanation for Kadalie's conduct was that he thought the time had come for a show-down with an over-mighty lieutenant, also not an implausible theory. For Champion undoubtedly regarded himself as something of a kingmaker.⁽²⁾ Champion's friends, however, advanced another explanation, among them

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1. E. Lewis to Lord Olivier 20th June, 1928 (B/Wits). Mrs. Lewis was wrong about the "Russian Jew" (Glass) - and about everything else.
 2. His pamphlet, The Truth about the I.C.U., perhaps "ghosted" by Batty (Telegram T. Lujiza to A.W.G. Champion 26th September, 1927, F 1927/76), was a eulogy of himself and had little about Kadalie.

Batty, who had gone to live in Durban and had apparently been working for Champion and drawing an I.C.U. salary.⁽¹⁾ Batty wrote:

"Kadalie is driven by the fear that the Government may call for an audit of all the Books at Head Office and we know what that would mean. Therefore, at all cost, Kadalie must confine the trouble to Natal." (2)

It is not impossible that Kadalie was hoping, by dropping Champion, to escape responsibility for the I.C.U. debts contracted in Durban. Cowley, after collecting a considerable income from the Union in 1926-1927, was no longer being paid and was dunning it. Kadalie prevaricated. Although he did not have a fraction of the thousand pounds that the lawyer was demanding, he gained time by quibbling about certain items on the bill and by promising payment and then going back on his promise. One of the heaviest charges was Champion's own costs in the Lenono case and the easiest way of reducing the bill and delaying payment was to question the I.C.U.'s responsibility for them. In February the General Secretary (Kadalie) and Glass, together with other Union leaders, called at Cowley's office to discuss the outstanding account and ways of reducing future expenditure, and it was then that they repudiated responsibility for the Lenono costs, objecting at the same time to the payment of the retainer which Cowley claimed as compensation for not taking cases against the I.C.U. Cowley was told that he must get the Lenono costs from Champion himself, and this he

1. W. Smith (?) to A.W.G. Champion 29th August, 1927 (F 1927/50). Batty seems to have been behind an abortive I.C.U. Co-operative Society, which Gumbs favoured but Champion peremptorily put a stop to. (A.F. Batty to A.W.G. Champion 27th October, 1927 (F 1927/100c); J.G. Gumbs to A.W.G. Champion 27th October, 1927 (F 1927/100b); Minutes of National Council November, 1927 (F 1927/124), p.11-12.

2. A.F. Batty to A.W.G. Champion 18th April, 1928 (F 1928/26).

promptly tried to do,⁽¹⁾ in spite of the fact that he entertained hopes of enlisting Champion's support in securing election to the House of Assembly to represent Africans in the event of the passage of Hertzog's "Native Bills" - "even though I lose money by it".⁽²⁾ Champion, of course, had no more money than Kadalie. At the beginning of March, 1928, his patience worn out, Cowley threatened to issue a summons if his bill were not paid.⁽³⁾ Kadalie seemed to think - erroneously, as it turned out - that the I.C.U. was safe from any legal action because it was "an unincorporated body, capable in law neither of suing nor of being sued".⁽⁴⁾ Perhaps because he too was doubtful, Cowley delayed for some months, and, when the summons was issued, it was prudently issued against, not only the I.C.U., but also the trustees of the African Workers' Club - one of them Champion - which was the only institution connected with the I.C.U. that had any assets.⁽⁵⁾

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1. C. Cowley to A.W.G. Champion 17th February, 1928 (two letters - F 1928/9 and 10); C. Cowley to C. Kadalie 17th February, 1928 (F 1928/21c). Shortly afterwards Kadalie, with incredible optimism or in utter desperation, asked Champion for a loan of £200 from the directors of Udibi lwase Afrika to help buy a farm in Natal. (C. Kadalie to A.W.G. Champion 13th March, 1928, F 1928/17).
 2. C. Cowley to A.W.G. Champion 17th February, 1928 (F 1928/9).
 3. Telegram C. Cowley to I.C.U., Johannesburg 8th March, 1928 (F 1928/22i).
 4. C. Kadalie to C. Cowley 16th March, 1928 (F 1928/19). Kadalie added insult to injury by enclosing a cheque for £30.
 5. Summons. Supreme Court of South Africa, Natal Provincial Division. Between Cecil Cowley, Plaintiff, versus I.C.U., first defendant, and Abel Ngcobo, Allison Wessels George Champion, Theodore Butler Kumalo in their capacity as trustees of certain landed properties purporting to belong to the African Workers' Club, 2nd defendants, 8th May, 1928 (F 1928/34).

It was clearly not the intention of either the General Secretary or the Organising Secretary to break off all relations and Champion went ahead with preparations to present his defence before the proposed commission of inquiry.⁽¹⁾ From Inanda Champion got his wife to write to Kadalie, who replied sympathetically and at his most charming. "I am deeply touched to know that Comrade Champion is laid up and that he is unable to do any writing ... I hope, however, Providence will restore him his usual health."⁽²⁾ Meanwhile in Durban, during Champion's absence, the I.C.U. members, incensed by the treatment meted out to their compatriot, embraced his cause with enthusiasm. On 19th April Durban branch held an emergency meeting from which Smith, the Financial Secretary, who was in the town with de Norman, both members of the commission of inquiry,⁽³⁾ and Abel Ngcobo, the Provincial Secretary for Natal, were excluded, on the ground that they had not spoken up for the Organising Secretary in the National Council. The resolutions of the emergency meeting included the following.

"As the financial report of income and expenditure of the head office of the I.C.U. has not been presented to congress during the past three years, and as the Durban branch has transferred thousands of pounds during that period to the head office, we demand the immediate audit of the books at head office for the past three years ...

"... we reserve to ourselves the right to take what constitutional and legal action we deem advisable in the interests of the Durban branch in particular and of the I.C.U. nationally.

"We place on record our entire confidence in comrade A.W.G. Champion, and admire his unfailing honesty and integrity and the unselfish work done by him on behalf of the black man in Natal and Zululand, especially in Natal, during the past four years, and we regret that he has been placed in a false position through jealousy, envy and personal vindictiveness of a few individuals." (4)

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1. A.W.G. Champion to C. Kadalie 14th April, 1928 (F 1928/25).
 2. C. Kadalie to Mrs. R. Champion 20th April, 1928 (F 1928/28).
 3. R. de Norman to A.W.G. Champion 26th June, 1928 (F 1928/51).
 4. Natal Advertiser 20th April, 1928.

At the end of April Kadalie set out for Durban to try and pacify the angry supporters of Champion. Apparently his nerve failed him on the way and he stopped short at Pietermaritzburg, whereupon the Durban members who had assembled to meet him, impatient from their long and fruitless wait, sent a car to fetch him from his bed in the middle of the night. After a stormy and unprofitable meeting, during which he had the utmost difficulty in gaining a hearing, Kadalie was allowed to go at daybreak upon promising to attend a resumed meeting in the evening. He did not go back, but fled to Pietermaritzburg and then to Johannesburg. The adjourned meeting was subdued and, although some speakers talked of secession, the majority was against it.⁽¹⁾ One result, however, of the confrontation with Kadalie was the resurgence of the tribal feeling that the I.C.U. had been largely successful in suppressing. "We are angry, terribly angry," declared one speaker, "but let us show Kadalie we Zulus are gentlemen, and will not be interfered with by a man from Nyasa (sic)."⁽²⁾

A few days later, at its weekly meeting, Durban branch delivered an ultimatum, demanding that the National Council should meet in the city with/fourteen days, reinstate Champion and abandon the commission of inquiry, failing which "drastic measures" would be taken.⁽³⁾

1. Natal Mercury 27th and 28th April, 1928; The Natal Advertiser 28th April, 1928; The Natal Witness 28th April, 1928.

2. Natal Mercury 27th April, 1928.

3. Resolutions proposed by General Meeting held in Durban Thursday 2nd May, 1928 (F 1928/32).

The next Sunday, 6th May, Champion was brought from his sick bed to witness a demonstration in his support.⁽¹⁾ Two weeks later Durban seceded. Champion professed, in a letter to Kadalie, ignorance of this plot; said that he had gone to Durban on Sunday 20th May to address the members, but, discovering what was afoot, had declined to speak; and asked for "an advice", complaining that since the Conference he had received no information at all, from either Head Office or the Natal Provincial Office, and that the only news he had heard had been from the papers and from Smith and de Norman.⁽²⁾ His complaint was unjustified. For, at the end of April, he had been sent a copy of the accountants' report on the Durban books.⁽³⁾ Meanwhile Champion's white friends were unsparing in their advice; A.F. Batty was urging him not to "take this setback lying down", "to defeat the diabolical plot up North";⁽⁴⁾ Mrs. Palmer was exhorting him to submit to the inquiry in the interests of clearing his name and reputation, and to appreciate the dilemma of the Conference, which, in the circumstances, could not have acted otherwise than it did. She regarded secession as "disastrous ... a serious decline in the importance and influence of the Union",

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1. A.W.G. Champion: Mehlomadala, p.8 (Translation, p.5).
 2. A.W.G. Champion to C. Kadalie 22nd May, 1928 (F 1928/39). To Mrs. Palmer also he disclaimed any knowledge of the impending secession. (A.W.G. Champion to M. Palmer 23rd May, 1928, F 1928/40). This is difficult to believe, as, by his own admission, he was getting visitors at Inanda from Durban. He may not have been behind the secession, but he certainly did not discourage it.
 3. C. Kadalie to A.W.G. Champion 23rd April, 1928 (F 1928/29).
 4. A.F. Batty to A.W.G. Champion 18th April, 1928 (F 1928/26).

especially if Champion consented to lead the dissident branch. For "such a proceeding, though it might be immediately gratifying to you, would in the end destroy your prestige with the white people and with many of your own people." (1)

Ignoring the advice of Mrs. Palmer, Champion accepted the position of General Secretary of a separate organisation, the I.C.U. yase Natal. It is easy to see Champion's point of view.

"I was responsible for the biggest contribution to the funds of the I.C.U. . My activities in Natal were responsible for the magnitude of the I.C.U. in 1926 and 1927. We had funds enough to send Mr. Kadalie to the Geneva Conference and we supported him with over £800 while he was overseas ... I had caused the freedom of Mr. Kadalie when the Government had put a ban against his free movements, but when he came back from Europe he turned up (sic) against me ..." (2)

This was broadly true.

Writing to Kadalie in May, the Natal leader brought forward a catalogue of complaints.

"I do not know what were your movements at the time when you came with Mr. Joe Kokozela (3) but people here seem to say a lot of things which are supposed to have been said by you and Kokozela, going so far as to say that there were threats made that my influence was going to be blotted out. That while they were hurt by the burning of the offices in Greytown & etc., you were forcing girls in the Hall to dance on a gramophone (sic). That while you had been condemning the action of Mr. Lenono in their meetings you suddenly went to dine with him where all the enemies of the Durban Branch of the I.C.U. were entertained and actually slept there yourself ... For the first time a branch that has fought for your freedom more than any other branch has turned against you, even murdering you to them would be nothing ... The stigma stamped on my character in Bloemfontein will remain like the scar of a wound." (4)

1. M. Palmer to A.W.G. Champion 21st May, 1928 (F 1928/38). Cf. also M. Palmer to A.W.G. Champion 6th June, 1928 (F 1928/43).

2. A.W.G. Champion: Mehlomadala, p.21.

3. In March, 1928.

4. A.W.G. Champion to C. Kadalie 14th May, 1928 (F 1928/35).

Champion suggested that Kadalie's appointment of an auditor to investigate the Durban accounts was an act of revenge "to damage my character more than the Judge had done." The motive for the alleged revenge is, however, obscure.⁽¹⁾

Before the final breach ^{at} attempt was made to effect a reconciliation. Although a settlement was patched up, which provided for Champion's reinstatement, the ending of a secession and provincial autonomy in financial matters,⁽²⁾ it was never implemented and it is unlikely that Champion ever intended to take Durban back into the I.C.U., even if he could have done.

The success of Champion in defying Kadalie was probably the most important reason for the hatching of a plot in June, 1928, to oust the General Secretary. The conspirators, calling themselves the Clean Administration Group, issued a Manifesto complaining that "ever since the inception of the Union no financial statement had been given to the Congresses or published"⁽³⁾ and promising reform. The Group included Maduna, Modiakgotla and 'Mote⁽⁴⁾ and possibly C.F. Glass.⁽⁵⁾ The scorn of Champion, who was implicitly included in the condemnation, knew no bounds. "To me the Clean Administration

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1. There was something about Robert Sambo, a compatriot of Kadalie's, who was deported from Southern Rhodesia for attempting to establish the I.C.U. there and then deported from South Africa, and Kadalie's motor car.
 2. Natal Advertiser 15th June, 1928; telegram C. Kadalie to A.W.G. Champion 21st June, 1928 (F 1928/50).
 3. W.G. Ballinger: Memorandum n.d. (B/Wits).
 4. A.W.G. Champion to President and Members of the National Council 26th June, 1928 (F 1928/53; B/UCT). 'Mote is identified as the "man who betrayed his own men during the Bloemfontein riots."
 5. "... others who did not care to have their names known including white renegades who have failed both in the Communist Party and Trade Union Congress." (Ibid). Champion mentions a fifth, "a man who should be arrested because he stole the I.C.U. Funds", Perhaps Simon Elias.

Group stands in a position of Satan trying to reprove sin ..."

Then, after cataloguing Maduna's dishonesties and inefficiencies as Provincial Secretary successively in Durban, Bloemfontein and Port Elizabeth, he continues,

"Both Maduna and Modiakgotla are political failures of the Native Congress. The former was picked up by Kadalie in Natal after losing his job because he had been convicted of theft from his employers, while the latter was picked up by me when he had no fixed job, living a life of a political renegade. Poor Kadalie, not knowing the game, allowed these men to separate him from me for things that were of the past tense, and could be overlooked with impunity. He failed to realise that their only object was to divide and kill ... Who will trust them ... with their records?" (1)

De Norman, himself disaffected, was just as contemptuous.

"... These fellows I do not in the least trust because they are no better than their chief. The publication, all the same, of the Manifesto by his friends will be a revelation to many of the 'great' Man's friends (Europeans), some of whom regard him as an Angel.

"I am now auditing the books of the Head Office and ... the matters to be disclosed in this Audit will astound many people ... I do not know whether I will be able to complete the Audit, as the Office Furniture may be attached any day and we might have to get out ... The great man is away to Fort Hare to deliver an address before the Missionary Conference - more notoriety. He absolutely does not care a bean what happens. As long as he can squander money he is satisfied.

"It seems to me that the lead given by Natal will be followed by Free State and the Transvaal ... No money is coming from any quarter and there is not a penny in the bank. Wages, as you are aware, have not been paid for some time and accounts are remaining unpaid. It seems there is no other option but for the closing of the Head Office.

"One thing, however, the so-called left wingers agree with us is that Kadalie must go. But of course there (sic) motives are different. Under the guise of Clean Administration, they are office seekers ... One can safely say that Kadalie, as far as Public Life is concerned is finished." (2)

Such was the I.C.U. just before the arrival of the adviser from England, W.G. Ballinger.

1. Ibid.

2. R. de Norman to A.W.G. Champion 26th June, 1928 (F 1928/51).

APPENDIXThe 1927 Constitution⁽¹⁾

Section 3 - Objects in the 1925 Constitution and Rule 2 - Objects in the 1927 Constitution are closely parallel, the latter fuller.

1925 - Section 3

(a) To regulate the wages and conditions of labour, and to foster the best interests of its members in their different spheres of occupation, irrespective of sex.

1927 - Rule 2

(1) The principal objects of the Union are the regulation of the relations between workmen and employers and between workmen and workmen ...

(2)(a) ... the obtaining and maintaining of just and proper hours of work, rates of wages, conditions of employment and the fostering of the best interests of the members, irrespective of sex, in their different occupations,

including participation in the management and control of the industries in which the members are engaged.

(b) The negotiation and settlement of differences and disputes between the members of the union and employers and other trade unions and persons, by collective bargaining or agreement, withdrawal of labour or by other legal action.

1. The discussion that follows is concerned with the two printed and surviving Constitutions, those of April, 1925, and December, 1927. It can be assumed that, apart from the amendments noted in the text above, the 1925 Constitution remained largely unaltered until the latter date. It is possible that the 1926 revision was closer in its wording to the Kimberley Constitution than was the 1925 Constitution, in which case the influence of Creech Jones and Grimshaw upon the Constitution introduced in December, 1927, would have been even slighter than is suggested here.

(b) To provide legal assistance to the Organisation, and to its members in matters connected with their daily employment

(c) To establish sick, unemployment, old age and death benefits for its members.

(d) To take shares in any syndicate approved by the National Council, or the Board of Arbitration, and to establish such commercial enterprises as may be deemed necessary for the progress of the Organisation and its members.

(e) To establish Branches of the Organisation throughout the African continent.

(f) To become attached to, or to federate with other unions,

and to be represented on public bodies or other unions.

(c) Generally the power to promote the welfare of the members of the union in such manner as the National Council from time to time shall deem expedient.

(d) The provision of benefits to members as follows:- (i) Legal advice and assistance to the union and its members where, in the Opinion of the National Council, it is necessary or expedient. (1)

(d)(two) Assistance to members or particular classes of members in sickness, unemployment, old age, funeral expenses

and such other forms of assistance as may from time to time be decided by the union.

(j)(two) to take shares in syndicates approved of by the National Council and to establish such commercial enterprises as may be deemed necessary for the progress of the organisation or its members.

(g) The furtherance of, or participation, financially or otherwise directly, or indirectly, in the work or purpose of any association or federal body having for its objects the furthering of the interests of labour, trade unionism or trade unionists.

(e) The furtherance of such objects as the social and political emancipation of African workers and others, and of their representation on public bodies.

1. A reference to irresponsible legal actions instituted by local officials.

(g) To establish Clubs, Debating Societies, etc., with the object of educating the workers, especially on Labour Questions.

(h) To publish pamphlets, newspapers, or any other literature that may be deemed necessary by the National Council or the Board of Arbitration, for the material and spiritual welfare of the members of the Organisation.

(i) To impose levies upon its members to carry out the foregoing objects and for such other National purposes as the National Council may from time to time decide.

(j) All monies expended for any or all of the foregoing objects shall be deemed the capital or current expenditure of the Organisation.

(d) (three) Grants and endowment to clubs, schools, debating societies, etc., having among their objects the education of trade unionists.

(h) The provision of opportunities for social intercourse and the promotion of sport and social events among the members.

(f) The establishment or carrying on or participation, financially or otherwise, directly or indirectly, in the business or printing or publishing of books, pamphlets, journals or other literature that may be deemed necessary for the spiritual and material welfare of the members of the organisation.

(i) The union shall have power to raise or borrow money in such manner and on such terms as may seem expedient, and shall also have power to provide funds by subscription, levy or otherwise as the union or National Council may direct, for maintaining these objects or all or some of the benefits from time to time authorised in pursuance of these rules and for the establishment or maintenance of any undertaking of any kind, financial or otherwise, authorised by the union, and for any action, including collective bargaining, striking, withholding of labour, taking action under statutes, either severally or jointly, or the security of agreements concerning wages or other conditions of employment, whether in defence of the members or in support of other members of allied or other industries which may, in the opinion of the union or the National Council, be deemed to be calculated to further the interests of the union or of the trade movement (sic) generally.

(j) For all or any of the above objects the union and the National Council shall have power, inter alia (one) to acquire, lease, mortgage or purchase, hold or otherwise deal with land, buildings, or farms in the interests of its members and to erect and furnish such buildings as may be considered necessary or desirable.

(three) to raise funds by borrowing money on any real or personal property of the union or by levies on its members, or any class thereof, and on such terms as may seem expedient to the National Council.

Clause 2(j) of the 1927 Constitution is curious and, if evidence to the contrary did not exist, could well give rise to a suspicion that the final version was different from the draft that Creech Jones saw. Not only does it bring back the peculiar clause (d) of the 1925 Constitution, displaced from its original position, but also (j) (three) to some extent unnecessarily repeats clause (i). Moreover, (j) (one) had special relevance to the I.C.U.'s situation at the end of 1927.

Membership was open to all workers, men and women,⁽¹⁾ and enrolment fees and weekly contributions remained as before.⁽²⁾ Members received a membership card⁽³⁾ (but apparently no longer a badge) and were expected to conform to the rules of the Union under pain of fine or expulsion.⁽⁴⁾ Financial membership was redefined. Any

1. Rule 13 - Membership (1)

2. Rule 13 (2) One of the few changes made by the National Council (at its meeting of November, 1927) to the draft Constitution concerned enrolment fees, which may well have been restored to the old level after being reduced. The National Council also raised the contribution of honorary members to two pounds a year. (Rule 13 (4)).

3. Rule 13 (3)

4. Rule 11 - Branches (13); Rule 13 (1)

member six weeks behind in subscriptions (formerly 10s.6d.) was unfinancial and any member more than thirteen weeks in arrears forfeited membership.⁽¹⁾ Benefits in one way were administered more generously than before: by the 1925 Constitution no death benefit was paid unless the member was fully paid up at the time of death,⁽²⁾ whereas by the 1927 Constitution it was sufficient to be a financial member.⁽³⁾ On the other hand, it was now necessary to have been a member for nine months and paid at least thirty-nine contributions,⁽⁴⁾ compared with the four months' membership required previously.⁽⁵⁾ Another change was that benefit, previously met wholly from the proceeds of a branch levy, was now paid by the National Council from central funds supplemented by the proceeds of a branch levy. The member paid either 6d. or 3d. a week and the benefit varied between £5 and £10 according to the subscription and the length of the period over which it was paid.⁽⁶⁾ A new concession was the payment of dispute benefit. All members who had paid dues for six months would be entitled to receive a benefit to be fixed by the National Council in the event of an official strike or a lock-out.⁽⁷⁾ There was still no provision for sickness, unemployment and old age assistance, in spite of the proclaimed objects of the Union.⁽⁸⁾

1. Rule 13 (5)

2. Section 22 - Death Benefit (b)

3. Rule 14 - Benefits (2)

4. Rule 14 (2)

5. Section 22 (a)

6. Rule 14 (2) In other respects the regulations covering funeral benefit in the 1927 Constitution (Rule 14 (2)) corresponded to those covering death benefit in the 1925 Constitution (Section 22)

7. Rule 14 (1)

8. Rule 2 - Objects (d)

The government of the Union remained vested in the Conference (or Congress),⁽¹⁾ which alone could alter the Constitution⁽²⁾ and which was to meet annually.⁽³⁾ The maximum number of delegates from each branch was raised from four to five (plus the chairman and secretary in branches with more than 1,500 members) and provision made for separate provincial representation. Otherwise the rules of representation remained the same.⁽⁴⁾

Between Conferences the government of the Union was vested in the National Council.⁽⁵⁾ The composition of the latter was now explicitly stated, viz. one elected member from each province together with the Head Office officials and the Provincial Secretaries, and its annual meetings were increased in number from one to three,

1. Rule 3 - Constitution and Government (1)
2. Rule 15 - Interpretation and Amendment of Rules (2)
3. Rule 4 - Congress (1)
4. Rule 4 (1). The procedure governing the submission of motions and the drawing up of the agenda is dealt with in Rule 4 (2) and provision is made in Rule 4 (3) and (4) for the appointment of tellers, scrutineers and a Standing Orders Committee. All this was new. Rule 4 (5) ("The Congress shall be the Court of Review of all decisions and activities of the National Council.") and (6) (Remuneration of delegates) follow fairly closely the paragraphs of Section 21 of the 1925 Constitution. Rule 4 (7) - "Voting shall be by show of hands and not by card vote" - was new, without, however, introducing a new practice. The "Standing Orders and Rules of procedure at all Conferences" (a) to (n) of the 1925 Constitution, concerned with the rules of debate, voting and election, were dropped from the 1927 version.
5. Rule 3.

with provision for special meetings.⁽¹⁾ Its powers also were described more fully.⁽²⁾ Generally the effect of the changes was to enhance the dignity and power of the National Council.

Rule 3 (7): "The general policy of the Union shall, subject to the Annual Congress, be determined by the National Council."⁽³⁾

Rule 5 (6): "The National Council shall appoint all paid officers and permanent officials of the Union ... It shall have the power to dismiss any officer, but such officer shall ... have a right of appeal to the next ordinary Congress. The Council shall allocate officers, prescribe their powers and duties and terms of employment, as well as set up the proper departments for the administration of the business of the Union." (4)

Rule 5 (7): "... It may delegate such of its powers as are necessary or expedient and consistent with its powers and duties ... to any sub-committee or national or sectional committee..."

Rule 5 (8): "The National Council shall decide how the surplus funds of the Union shall be invested and how such investments shall be varied ..."

Rule 5 (9): "... the National Council shall have the power generally to carry on the business of the Union and to do such things and to authorise such acts, including the payment of monies on behalf of the Union, as they, in the general interests of the Union, may deem expedient. It shall have power to prepare programmes of action and policy generally, power to sanction the payment of monies, authorise payments, make levies, either generally or for particular purposes or districts. It alone shall have power to sanction payment of benefit in respect of any strike and in respect of any lock-out. It shall have power to expend monies on any of the purposes authorised by these rules, or on any other purpose which in their opinion is expedient in the interests of the Union or its members, including the right to expend monies on the legal assistance of the members or officers or their dependants, whether in bringing or defending actions or prosecutions, in all cases which they may deem fit, and such other legal action as in their opinion may be necessary to protect the interests of the Union. They may send delegates or deputations to represent the Union for any purpose they think fit."

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1. Rule 5 - National Council (1) and (3)
 2. Rule 5 (2) corresponds to Section 9 (a), (b) and (c) of the 1925 Constitution; the first part of Rule 5 (5) corresponds to Section 9 (d); the first part of Rule 5 (7) corresponds to Section 9 (g) and (h); Rule 5 (10) corresponds to Section 9 (i). Rule 5 (6), the second part of (7), (8) and (9) were new. The quorum remained at seven, but no longer had to include the President. (Rule 7 - Officers of the Organisation (3)).
 3. In formulating policy and in determining the territorial areas of branches, the National Council was required to seek advice from any province, district or trade that was affected. (Rule 3 (6) and (7)).
 4. This rule repeats Rule 5 (2), which was a survival from the 1925 Constitution, Section 9.

The National Council Executive Bureau was abolished, or rather replaced by the National Council Sub-Committee, made up of the President, the two Vice-Presidents and the three principal paid officials (the President and two other members constituting a quorum) and required to meet at least once in every two months. The National Council could delegate to it any of its powers with the exception of that of calling a general strike.⁽¹⁾

Certain changes were made amongst the office bearers. A clear distinction was drawn between honorary officers and salaried officers. The former - the President and the two Vice-Presidents, who were to be elected at the Annual Conference - were no longer permitted to serve for more than three consecutive years at a time.⁽²⁾ The latter were made up of the General Secretary, the Organising Secretary, the Financial Secretary and the Research Secretary. Except that the propaganda function of the General Secretary received rather less emphasis and his subordination to the National Council rather more, his duties were defined in much the same terms as those of the National Secretary under the 1925 Constitution. His administrative duties remained ill-defined: he "shall have control of the Head Office ... generally supervise the work of the Union in all departments and of all other officials."⁽³⁾ The functions of the new Organising Secretary were quite new, concerned almost wholly with building up membership. He

1. Rule 5 (4)

2. Rule 7 (1), (2) and (3)

3. Rule 6 - Offices (1); Rule 7 (4)

"shall receive reports in regard to membership and organisation from the Provincial Secretaries, shall watch the development of membership in the respective occupational sections, shall conduct membership campaigns, watch the growth or decline of membership in various branches or provinces ..." (1)

It was also his task to supervise the Provincial Secretaries.⁽²⁾ The Financial Secretary under the new Constitution was a more important official than under the old, virtually taking over the functions of the old General Secretary, including such non-financial ones as keeping the members' statistical register and minutes of Conference and National Council meetings, but excluding the supervisory functions.⁽³⁾ The Research Secretary, who was not provided for in the 1925 Constitution,

"shall make it his business to supply officials with information in connection with the financial and economic conditions of the various industries with which the Union is concerned, shall prepare information for the use of the Congress and National Council and the national officers in the matter of political and industrial relationship. He shall compile membership statistics, shall be responsible for organising the library and educational activities of the Union, and shall advise the General Secretary in regard to Bills before Parliament, Acts of Parliament, particularly those dealing with industrial legislation and native affairs, and shall assist the General Secretary in making representations to Parliament, employers of labour and the public bodies on behalf of the Union and the members thereof." (4)

Rules 8, 9, 10 and 12 of the new Constitution were concerned with financial matters. The function of the Trustees were defined in Rule 8 with greater care than had been the case in the earlier

1. Rule 7 (5)

2. Rule 7 (8)

3. Rule 7 (6). The offices of Financial and General Secretary, as mentioned in the text, were abolished in the earlier 1927 revision. The reference here is to those offices as they were under the printed 1925 Constitution.

4. Rule 7 (7)

Constitution.⁽¹⁾ The financial regulations of the December 1927 Constitution followed those of the 1925 version closely,⁽²⁾ and, therefore, were a departure from the amendments of the earlier 1927 revision. The 1925 regulations were somewhat relaxed. Whereas the 1925 Constitution forbade any loans from Union funds and required three signatures on cheques (those of the President, General Secretary and one Trustee), the 1927 Constitution did permit loans "on good security approved of by the National Council Sub-Committee"⁽³⁾ and cheques required only two signatures, those of any two members of the National Council Sub-Committee.⁽⁴⁾ On the whole the branches were treated more generously. Rule 10 (10) provided for monthly remittances to Provincial, District and Branch Secretaries for petty cash needs, while Section 12 (j) of the 1925 Constitution, which imposed on branches an annual levy, varying with branch income, to cover administrative costs, was left out of the new Constitution. More important was that branches were henceforth allowed to increase the size of their reserve funds by retaining one penny from each member's weekly subscription.⁽⁵⁾ The branch fund could be used for "assistance to members in distress, the payment of the contributions of members who, through no fault of their own, are unemployed, or in distress, the promotion of certain social and charitable objects."⁽⁶⁾ In most respects the rules governing the branch funds remained the same,⁽⁷⁾ the only change being the requirement that the branch fund

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1. They were required to have been financial members of not less than two years' standing.
 2. Section 12 (a) of the 1925 Constitution = Rule 10 - Funds of the Union (1); 12 (b) = Rule 10 (2); 12 (c) = 10 (3); 12 (d) = 10 (4) (a); 12 (e) = 10 (5); 12 (f) = 10 (6); 12 (g) = 10 (7); 12 (h) = 10 (8); 12 (i) = 10 (9); 12 (k) = Rule 9 - Audit. 12 (j) was dropped.
 3. Rule 10 (5)
 4. Rule 10 (9)
 5. Rule 10 (4) (b) and Rule 12 - Branch Fund (1)
 6. Rule 12 (1)
 7. Rule 12 (2) = Section 20 - Branch Reserve Funds (b); 12 (3) = 20 (c); 12 (4) = 20 (d); 12 (5) = 20 (e).

should be deposited in a bank approved by The National Council and that cheques be signed by the Provincial, District or Branch Secretary and Branch Chairman.⁽¹⁾

The provincial divisions were retained, but their number increased. In the 1925 Constitution there were Provincial Secretaries for the Transkei, the Transvaal, the Eastern Province of the Cape, Natal and the Orange Free State, to which the Western Province and Griqualand West had later been added; in the 1927 Constitution there were also to be Provincial Secretaries for Griqualand East and Pondoland, Zululand, Basutoland, Swaziland, Bechuanaland, South-West Africa, Rhodesia, and "such other areas as may from time to time be determined", while the Transvaal was split into two - North-Eastern and South-Western.⁽²⁾ A new feature of the provincial organisation was the establishment of provincial advisory committees "representative of the trade interests as well as territorial membership".⁽³⁾ With some slight alterations the 1925 description of the functions of the Provincial Secretaries remained the same.⁽⁴⁾ There was, however, imposed an additional duty that was related to the new policy of more rigid sectionalisation of members.

"The National Council shall require that each Provincial Secretary not only becomes acquainted with the facts in a general way of the industries of the members in his province, but also acquires specialised knowledge of one or more of the main industrial sections enrolled in the Union, as shall be determined by the National Council. The General Secretary shall be able to call on the services of any Provincial Secretary in regard to the facts of any particular industry with which the Union

1. Rule 12 (6)

2. Provision was also made for district divisions, but it is not clear how they fitted in the province-branch structure. (Rule 6 (2)).

3. Rule 7 (8)(a)

4. One change was that they were made responsible for negotiations. (Rule 7 (8)(b)).

"is concerned, and the Provincial Secretaries shall co-operate if necessary with the General Secretary in major negotiations in the industry with which they have been required to obtain specialised knowledge." (1)

There was some change at the branch level, generally for the sake of greater strictness. The organisation of branches on the basis of occupation was envisaged, as well as the more familiar organisation on the basis of place of work or residence.⁽²⁾ Each branch was to consist of a minimum of thirty members except by permission of the National Council,⁽³⁾ and any branch with two hundred or more members might have a salaried secretary, subject to the approval of the National Council.⁽⁴⁾ There were to be regular branch meetings, at least monthly,⁽⁵⁾ at which only paid up members were allowed to vote.⁽⁶⁾ It was the duty of the branch members to

"consider all correspondence received by the Branch Secretary, propositions for membership, financial statement of Branch, financial standing of members, reports of committee work, businesses (sic) referred to the Branch from Head Office, and all matters of interest to the membership." (7)

No branch was allowed to affiliate to any outside organisation without National Council permission⁽⁸⁾ and any branch seceding from the

1. Rule 7 (8)(c)

2. Rule 3 (6)

3. Rule 11 - Branches (1)

4. Rule 11 (4)

5. Rule 11 (1)

6. Rule 11 (10)

7. Rule 11 (14)

8. Rule 11 (12)

I.C.U. was required, under threat of legal proceedings, against branch officers, to surrender "all monies, books, papers, documents, furniture and other property of the Union."⁽¹⁾ The branch executive, without, however, any change in its composition, was renamed the branch committee,⁽²⁾ and this now performed as a whole the functions of the old finance committee, which was abolished.⁽³⁾ An additional financial safeguard was the appointment every quarter of two auditors from amongst the ordinary members to examine the accounts of the branch, while, in the case of big branches, the Provincial Secretaries had the power to appoint a public auditor for a quarterly examination of accounts.⁽⁴⁾ The duties of the branch secretary were defined rather more fully and the branch committee was given greater control over him.⁽⁵⁾ The duties of the branch chairman were set out for the first time: "to preside at all meetings of the branch and

1. Rule 11 (11)

2. Rule 11 (3)

3. Rule 11 (7)

4. Rule 11 (9). The latter provision (the appointment of a public auditor) was one of the few amendments to the draft made by the National Council at its Johannesburg meeting. (Minutes, p.5)

5. Rule 11 (7). "... Branch Secretaries shall attend all meetings of their respective branches ... and shall keep the accounts of their branches in a clear and intelligible manner. They shall conduct such correspondence as belong to their office. Should the Secretary's conduct be found unsatisfactory by the Branch Committee, that Committee shall have power to demand from the Secretary all books, papers and other property of the Union."

conduct the business with propriety and order. He shall supervise the working of the branch and all the officers."⁽¹⁾ In other respects the rules governing branches adhered to those of 1925.⁽²⁾

1. Rule 11 (6)

2. Section 19 - Branch Administration Regulations, 1925 Constituion: (a), (d) and (e) correspond to Rule 11 (2), the latter with slight elaboration;; (b), (f) and (g) = 11 (3); (l) corresponds partially to 11 (6); (i), (j), (k), (m) and (n) = 11;(7)(o), (q), (s) and (t), which are concerned with shop-stewards and collectors, correspond to 11 (8), which, however, with respect to remuneration - (p) and (r) of the 1925 Section 19 - says that payments are to be made "in accordance with the regulations issued by the National Council." Section 19 (c), (h) and (u) were dropped, (v) provided for elsewhere, viz. Rule 6 (4). The final rule of the 1927 Constitution (16 - Dissolution of the Union) laid it down that dissolution of the Union required the consent of five-sixths of the members.

CHAPTER VIII

The Adviser, 1928-1929

"The I.C.U. with all its shortcomings must boast of being the pioneer trade union that pioneered the trade union movement in South Africa under the leaderships (sic) of Messrs. Clements Kadalie and Allison Champion and that when there was a disagreement there came to South Africa William Ballinger who made a mess of the whole thing."

(A.W.G. Champion, c.1929)

"Ballinger did not manage to save the I.C.U. and I think you can argue without fear of libel that he was not the best man for the job. But even if he had been an angel I don't think he could have saved it. The causes of the collapse were too general to be laid at the door of any one man."

(E. Roux, 1944)

"Ballinger, with courage and firmness, has directed the general policy of the Union, and has insisted on sound financial administration and periodic auditing of accounts. Every penny of expenditure has been watched. This has proved too much for Kadalie."

(A. Creech Jones, 1929)

When Kadalie first raised in Britain the question of the secondment of an experienced trade union official as an adviser to the I.C.U., there was great difficulty in finding an experienced trade unionist who was willing to go and could be spared by his union. Eventually the choice fell upon W.G. Ballinger. William Ballinger, who had been born in England, but whose family had moved to Scotland when he was a child, was then thirty-four, much the same age as Kadalie, but he had come up the hard way. Though, like Kadalie, he had lost his father as a boy, he had no uncles to see him through school and, as the eldest of six, had to go out to work. His first job was on the coal 'screes', sorting out coal from slate and stone, but he learnt a trade in the blacksmithing department of the railway workshops, where he joined the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. A dedicated trade unionist and a member of the Independent Labour Party, Ballinger was an excellent example of those Scottish socialists, hardworking, self-denying and of humble origin, who have made such a notable contribution to the British labour movement. After attending Workers' Educational Association extra-mural classes at Glasgow University, he took up a scholarship at the Folk High School of Elsinore, working his way to Denmark in a tramp steamer. It was through a W.E.A. tutor, W.H. Marwick, that Ballinger first heard of the appointment with the I.C.U., for which Winifred Holtby was trying to find a suitable candidate.⁽¹⁾ He was put in touch with George Aitken of the Union of Democratic Control in Glasgow, who wrote to Miss Holtby, "I think Mr. Ballinger has many of the qualifications necessary. He has great ~~grit~~, adaptability, and considerable experience in industrial, municipal and electioneering work."⁽²⁾ At that

1. W.G. Ballinger: Winifred Holtby - first contacts with South Africa, undated MS (B/UST).

2. G. Aitken to W. Holtby 10th February, 1928 (B/CUT).

time he was acting as the agent of the Rev. James Barr, M.P. for Motherwell, and was secretary of the Motherwell Trades and Labour Council and a town and parish councillor.

To begin with Creech Jones had reservations about Ballinger's suitability, feeling that his trade union experience was not sufficiently long, varied and senior, but, after interviewing him at Manchester in March, 1928, he decided to recommend him. Miss Holtby was favourably impressed. "I like", she wrote, "very much the tone of the letters we have had from him. His personal friends speak of him with respect. I feel sure that he is the man."⁽¹⁾ Kadalie was satisfied with the choice,⁽²⁾ though apparently he had some difficulty in carrying the National Council.⁽³⁾ There was a long delay in completing the arrangements for the appointment, to the chagrin of Mrs. Lewis, who, since March, had been showing signs of impatience and anxiety, as she wanted to get someone respectable in and the odious Mr. Glass out.⁽⁴⁾ As it happened, Glass was out before Ballinger arrived, but there remained the danger of the introduction of someone else just as bad.⁽⁵⁾

In London Ballinger met Winifred Holtby and received a somewhat unsatisfactory and ill-informed briefing. There were hints about tribal dissensions within the I.C.U. ranks and about "financial

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1. W. Holtby to E. Lewis 11th April, 1928 (B/Wits).
 2. C. Kadalie to W. Holtby 2nd May, 1928 (B/UCT).
 3. According to Mrs. Lewis, opposition came from the "vice-presidents" (i.e. A.M. Jabavu and M.E.A. Johnson), but this seems doubtful. (Telegram to W. Holtby undated copy, B/Wits).
 4. Telegram E. Lewis to W. Holtby 27th March, 1928 (B/Wits).
 5. E. Lewis to Lord Olivier 20th June, 1928 (B/Wits).

difficulties", but nothing to prepare him for the chaos he was to encounter and little about the I.C.U. leadership. It appears that he had already heard a disquietening report from a veteran and much respected socialist who had been shocked by Kadalie's behaviour on his visit to Scotland the previous year - his pre-occupation with money and his comfort; but nothing he heard from Miss Holtby was sufficient to put him off. Why did he want to go? There were in socialists of the I.L.P. persuasion pronounced secular missionary proclivities. Winifred Holtby asked him

"if I would care to sacrifice a political career which certain people assured her was just ahead of me for the rigours of life in South Africa as a 'friend of the Natives'. I answered that it was understood that the appointment would be for one year or possibly two. She said that Africa might grip me and I should remain as a sort of liaison between labour in England and South Africa. I then replied to her first query by stating that the politico-socialist movement in Britain was full of place-seekers with independent means. The movement appeared to me to be dangerously near to being wrecked by these place-seekers and those who seemed to have forgotten the struggles of the early days because they had tasted the sweets of office as His Majesty's (Labour) Government. I then, in a rather joking fashion, told her of how my father had taken me as a boy of twelve to see Livingstone's birth place at Blantyre and how I had been inspired by the story of Livingstone's life and death. She said something to the effect that what Africa wanted was persons versed in the economics of industry as 20th century missionaries for uplift of the backward African races. This reminded me that George Aitken had spoken in a similar strain. I had to pull myself up with a start because I was casting myself in the rôle of a saviour of Black peoples." (1)

Before the new Adviser could sail two obstacles had to be overcome. One was the inability of the I.C.U. even to pay his passage. Creech Jones was scrupulously anxious not to have the fare paid by

1. W.G. Ballinger: Winifred Holtby - first contacts with South Africa.

sympathisers lest this should be interpreted as limiting Kadalie's freedom of choice,⁽¹⁾ but in the end it was paid by Miss Holtby. The surprising thing is that the appointment was proceeded with at all, given the I.C.U.'s dire financial straits. Kadalie was being less than honest, or at least wildly unrealistic, in promising a salary of £350 per annum plus "organising expenses",⁽²⁾ when he knew perfectly well that the I.C.U. was bankrupt, but though evasive, in letters to England, in his references to its difficulties, he was most anxious to get an adviser, presumably in the desperate hope of a miraculous rescue of his union from its plight. Yet, in his sublimely optimistic way, he was at the same time talking of going to Geneva again in 1928.⁽³⁾ Temporary assistance came from "A Friend" - almost certainly Mrs. Lewis, who promised £230 in monthly instalments towards the adviser's salary, on the interesting condition that payments would cease if any leader or official of the I.C.U. were convicted under Section 29 of the Native Administration Act, under which, of course, an action was then pending against Kadalie himself.⁽⁴⁾

The second obstacle was the difficulty in persuading the South African authorities to admit Ballinger into the country. In the end permission was granted, perhaps with the help of pressure from sympathisers in South Africa, and he sailed at the end of June on the Kildonan Castle. He carried letters of introduction from the

1. W. Holtby to E. Lewis 11th April, 1928 (B/Wits).

2. Telegram C. Kadalie to A. Creech Jones 4th May, 1928 (B/Wits).

3. C. Kadalie to W. Holtby 22nd February, 1928 (B/UCT).

4. Agreement (with corrections in Mrs. Lewis's hand) signed by C. Kadalie, headed Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union, and beginning "'A Friend' will give £300 to the I.C.U. as follows ..." (B/UCT). The balance of £70 was for Kadalie's legal defence.

Fabian Lord Olivier to Professor Macmillan of the University of the Witwatersrand, Howard Pim and J.D. Rheinallt Jones, chairman and secretary of the Johannesburg Joint Council of Europeans and Natives, and C.T. Loram of the Native Affairs Commission, documents of no great value because the first three were all ready to welcome him, while the fourth detested and feared the I.C.U.⁽¹⁾ On his arrival in Cape Town Ballinger was served with a notice declaring him a prohibited immigrant. When told that he had three days in which to appeal against this decision, Ballinger declined, because in doing so he would tacitly have admitted that he, though a British subject, could be denied admission into South Africa and because he would have had to leave the country pending the settlement of the appeal. The next move had to be made by the Minister of the Interior, Dr. D. F. Malan. Since, as a member of a coalition government that included the Labour Party and was therefore indirectly dependent upon the support of the white labour movement, he could scarcely expel a trade unionist who enjoyed the backing of the Trades Union Congress of Britain, he avoided scandal by granting the newcomer a temporary residence permit that required him to report his movements to the police, but at least allowed him to take up his duties. When it later became clear that the I.C.U. Adviser was no fire-brand,

1. Mrs. Lewis, as was noted above, attempted earlier in 1928 to obtain some of the money (£750 a year for five years) which the Carnegie Corporation entrusted to the Associated Joint Councils for allocation to worthy causes in South Africa. Dr. Loram was determined that none of this should reach the I.C.U. "I have before me reports of speeches made by I.C.U. leaders and it would be treachery to the Carnegie Corporation to allow them to be connected with a body which can utter such sentiments." (C.T. Loram to E. Lewis 8th February, 1928, B/Wits.)

but rather the protege of the Johannesburg Joint Council and the eminently respectable Johannesburg liberals, Dr. Malan gave way to the representation of the South African Trades Union Congress, whose secretary obtained an interview with him, to the extent of granting Ballinger a temporary permit which did not require periodic renewal. There was always the possibility, then, of expulsion, though the need for it never arose. Speaking at the Orange Free State Nationalist Party Congress in 1928, the Prime Minister went so far as to say, "Far from there being any reason for expelling Mr. Ballinger, he is, perhaps, to be welcomed."⁽¹⁾

Kadalie, borrowing the train fare from Mrs. Lewis, travelled down to Cape Town to meet his new Adviser. What he thought of him at the time can only be guessed at, since the only record of his first impression dates from the period after the two had fallen out. Ballinger's own comment was: "K. is a very likeable chap and has a fund of good sound common-sense",⁽²⁾ a view that he was later to modify. Together they visited the local branch offices in Hanover Street, where Ballinger found "Financial transactions appalling; routine slipshot".⁽³⁾ He also found morale low, animosity towards

1. Quoted E. Roux: Time Longer than Rope, p.179.

2. Draft letter to W. Holtby 22nd July, 1928 (B/Wits).

3. Ibid. Ballinger was met in Cape Town by John Wainer, a bacteriologist, who had been briefly associated with the I.C.U. in Johannesburg. In March, 1928, he was the subject of a question in the House of Assembly by H.B. Papenfus, who waxed indignant over a speech Wainer, who claims that he was misreported, was alleged to have made. Specially summoned to Cape Town by General Hertzog, he was persuaded to sever his connection with the Union. This must have been after April, 1928, because he attended the Bloemfontein Conference with Kadalie, with whom he motored to Bloemfontein, being shot at on the way. (Information supplied by Mr. Wainer 21st March, 1973. This interview was made possible through the help of Mr. D. Ticktin).

himself and resentment against Kadalie.⁽¹⁾ In fact, Cape Town three months later seceded.⁽²⁾ This was an inauspicious start and a portent that was soon afterwards confirmed by a brief stop-over at De Aar, where once more the Adviser was appalled by the apparent ignorance of, or indifference to, the elementary rules of book-keeping. In Johannesburg he was welcomed by a contingent of supporters and well-wishers, a reception that was chiefly notable for the hopes expressed by prominent representatives of South African liberal opinion. Addresses of welcome were delivered by Howard Pim and Reinallt Jones and a letter of welcome from Edgar Brookes. To welcome him at the I.C.U. headquarters, there were five writs from creditors demanding a total of £451 and only £100 in the bank, which presumably was still there only because it was on fixed deposit and the deposit receipt had been lost.⁽³⁾

Shortly after Ballinger's arrival in Johannesburg the members of the National Council pledged themselves to support the reorganisation of the head office in the way suggested by him and also the reorganisation of the union on the model of the Transport and General Workers', and furthermore "to in every way assist in carrying out the instructions of our Adviser sanctioned by the National Council Sub-Committee".⁽⁴⁾ They urged members to pay their subscriptions; and exhorted branch secretaries to honour their constitutional obligation to centralise these subscriptions and raise additional money

1. W.G. Ballinger: The rise and fall of the I.C.U., undated MS (B/UCT)

2. E. Roux: Time Longer than Rope, p.184.

3. Draft letter to W. Holtby 22nd July, 1928 (B/Wits).

4. President and General Secretary to Secretaries and Members of the I.C.U. Branches 26th July, 1928 (B/Wits). Also published in The Workers' Herald 18th August, 1928.

by means of a half-crown levy. "Mistakes have been made in the past", they admitted, "but they have not been wilful, they have been largely due to our inexperience."⁽¹⁾

The problems Ballinger faced in the succeeding months were immense, if not insoluble: bankruptcy, persecution of rural members, secession, strikes. Above all there was the shortage of money and there was the dunning of creditors - printers, lawyers, unpaid officials. Though rather against the better judgment of Creech Jones who thought that a trade union which had to rely on external subventions was not worth supporting,⁽²⁾ money was made available from England, where an appeal to trade unions, among other bodies and individuals, had a modest success,⁽³⁾ and from the International Federation of Trade Unions, which was persuaded by Walter Citrine of the British T.U.C. to make a grant.⁽⁴⁾ £50 (to help "right the wrong where coloured races under the British Empire are suffering gross wrong"⁽⁵⁾) came from the Harold Buxton Trust through the good offices of Rev. A. Shirley Cripps, a missionary in Southern Rhodesia and a great admirer of Kadalie.⁽⁶⁾ Such sums fell ludicrously short

1. Ibid.

2. W. Holtby to W.G. Ballinger 24th July, 1928 (B/Wits).

3. W. Holtby to E. Lewis and W.G. Ballinger 13th November, 1928 (B/UCT).

4. A. Creech Jones to W.G. Ballinger 28th December, 1928 (B/Wits).

5. A.S. Cripps to C. Kadalie 14th November, 1928 (B/Wits).

6. Ibid. The Trust was an Anglo-Catholic fund.

of the I.C.U.'s needs⁽¹⁾ and also had the effect of changing Ballinger's relationship with the Union. He was no longer merely the Adviser; he was paymaster, doling out to the officials small sums,⁽²⁾ some of them from his own salary,⁽³⁾ and practising rigid economies. In such a situation inevitably he came to determine how the I.C.U. was to proceed. A couple of years later, after he and Kadalie had quarrelled, Ballinger, at the Non-European Conference of 1930, asserted that he had never tried to influence policy, but only put his advice at the disposal of the African leaders. This claim, though no doubt made in good faith, is not borne out by the evidence of 1928.

The policy pursued was turning the I.C.U. from an "unwieldy mass organisation to united industry group organisation",⁽⁴⁾ the policy already established by Kadalie, and the restrained expression of moderate demands. Major financial reforms were introduced, above all a stamp system for subscriptions adopted from the I.L.P. Branch secretaries indented for stamps from head office, issued them in return for subscriptions and centralised the funds raised from their sale. At the same time an attempt was made to complete a central

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1. In December, 1928, the Standard Bank in Johannesburg closed the I.C.U. account because of the habit I.C.U. officials had of drawing cheques that could not be honoured. (Standard Bank to W.G. Ballinger 5th December, 1928, B/Wits).
 2. "Yesterday Tyamzashe, Kadalie, Geddes and Bennet Gwabini interviewed me relative to their economic needs ... They contend that it is impossible to carry on unless paid as under. £2 per week each ... In addition Kadalie and Tyam. £4.5.0 and £3.10 monthly for rent ... Rent is ... to be paid by me." (W.G. Ballinger to E. Lewis n.d., B/Wits).
 3. W.G. Ballinger to W. Citrine 8th May, 1929(B/UCT).
 4. Ibid.

register of members and to divide them into sections according to their trades. To tighten up financial controls Howard Pim was brought in to audit the accounts monthly. The old books were closed and a new set opened in October, 1928.⁽¹⁾ Apart from being very difficult to implement at a time of disintegration and instability, such measures, admirable as they were, had little chance of succeeding because of the chronic shortage of trained and efficient officials. To remedy this, Ballinger sounded the Principal of Lovedale, James Harrison, on the possibility of recruiting officials from among the students there and at Fort Hare,⁽²⁾ but the I.C.U. collapsed before anything could be done on these lines.

Though, naturally, higher wages were given priority (not less than 3s.6d. a day⁽³⁾), the objectives set by the Adviser were not, could not be, owing to the character of the I.C.U. membership, the sort of objectives that would have been pursued by a general labourers' union in a country where the economic situation was not complicated by agrarian and racial issues. The same old grievances were brought out - lack of land, the pass laws, the poll tax, the discriminatory franchise. But no land schemes, no pass burning. "We can only bring pressure on the Government and get the help of those who think Natives should get land ... The I.C.U. has and will continue to protest, against the pass laws ... We want a national convention to discuss the pass laws ... We also point out to the Poll Tax as being a tax without representation and it is wrong in

1. Ibid.

2. J. Harrison to E. Lewis 4th December, 1928 (B/UCT).

3. Speech by W.G. Ballinger at Viljoenskroon (B/Wits). Undated, but, from internal evidence, sometime in 1929.

principle to tax anybody without representation in Parliament."⁽¹⁾
 The only practical action envisaged was the presentation of cases to the Wage Board. There was little else that could be done.

Mrs. Lewis urged Ballinger to concentrate on Johannesburg and the Rand, to abandon Natal and withdraw from the rural areas. When Kadalie, shortly before the Adviser's arrival, mooted the possibility of a foray by the two of them into Natal, she dissuaded him. She was quite certain that Champion's support in Durban would evaporate and that, in any case, Kadalie should postpone "his fixed idea of one great union breaking down all tribalism" until it was firmly based on financially secure urban branches.⁽²⁾ The I.C.U., however, had an obligation to those distressed peasants who had trusted in it. Therefore an attempt was made to arrange talks with the farmers. Since those who had evicted members of the union were faced with a labour shortage, they were not at all unwilling to negotiate. The executive of the Farmers' Union of Volksrust agreed to let Ballinger address its annual conference on 20th October, 1928. At the time this was regarded as a great victory. But then the executive's invitation was repudiated by the rank and file and Ballinger was not given a hearing, because "a number of the members had produced newspaper cuttings of speeches made by the I.C.U. speakers, and it was argued on these speeches that it was no use attempting to negotiate with people who talked so wildly".⁽³⁾ In any case the farmers' battle was won. The I.C.U. had nothing to bargain with.

1. Ibid.

2. E. Lewis to H. Pim 16th July, 1928 (B/Wits & B/UCT).

3. The Star 22nd October, 1928.

Totally without funds, it was in no position to withhold labour. Ballinger endeavoured to maintain some contact with the countryside, but the strength of this contact depended wholly upon the devotion and altruism of unpaid representatives. In truth the peasants' revolt had petered out before the Adviser's arrival.

In spite of the Volksrust disappointment and the struggle against debt, the I.C.U. still seemed lively in the latter part of 1928 and to have a chance of recovery. Some money was coming in and there was still a measure of support.⁽¹⁾ The Workers' Herald was revived. In October the union became involved in two industrial disputes, one at Onderstepoort, near Pretoria, concerning the worker at the Government veterinary laboratory and farm, the other the workers at the Johannesburg post office. The first dispute involved 95 members of the I.C.U. who wanted their claim for higher wages to be presented by the Provincial Secretary (Abe Phoofolo) and the Pretoria branch secretary (J.B. Moroe). The Director of Veterinary Services refused to deal with the I.C.U. The five members of a deputation that tried to interview him were dismissed, precipitating a strike. The police were called in, arrested 76 strikers and marched them off to Pretoria, where they were charged under the Master and Servants Act. All but five were fined ten shillings and subsequently dismissed from their employment. Ballinger enlisted the support of the Trades Union Congress, which took up the matter

1. "Joh'burg B'ch is contributing over £60 per month, and improving. Good report from Port E. Other centres reports 'fair' but results not through financially. A number of branches are centralising amounts from £3 to £11." (General Observations, by W.G. Ballinger, undated, (B/Wits)).

with the Minister of Agriculture, but to no avail.⁽¹⁾ Although George Findlayy who had defended the strikers, was in favour of bringing an action against the police for false imprisonment,⁽²⁾ the matter was allowed to drop. Perhaps Mrs. Lewis was behind this decision. For she was attempting to extract from General Hertzog a promise of a more sympathetic attitude towards Ballinger and the I.C.U., and she no doubt wanted to avoid provocative actions. In a letter to the Prime Minister during the Onderstepoort dispute she requested him to grant the union's Adviser an interview, pleading at the same time for sympathy and understanding and promising an end to agitation among the farm workers. The inducement she offered was familiar and predictable. "Mr. Ballinger's work here is meant as a wedge between the native and the Moscow agitator and he might have some hopes of success if he could count on Government support instead of Government enmity."⁽³⁾ The request for an interview was once again courteously refused. Although Hertzog regarded Ballinger as a moderating influence, he could not agree that the I.C.U. was a proper trade union.

In her letter to the Prime Minister Mrs. Lewis expressed the hope that, if he met Ballinger, he would be won over to the extent of satisfying "the I.C.U. in their reasonable ambitions to act as mediators in such matters as a wages dispute such as that at Onderstepoort ...". So far was Hertzog from doing this, that shortly afterwards he rid himself of one of his ministers for having gone too far.

1. I.C.U. Newsletter 19th October, 1928.

2. Findlay and Niemeyer to C. Kadalie 19th October, 1928 (B/Wits).

3. E. Lewis to General Hertzog 15th October, 1928 (B/Wits).

towards recognising the I.C.U. This minor political crisis originated in the dissatisfaction of the African workers at the Johannesburg post office with their wages and conditions of work and in their wish to be represented by the I.C.U. in negotiations with their employer. Once more Ballinger obtained the support of the Trades Union Congress, and the Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, Walter Madeley of the Labour Party, at the end of October agreed to receive the T.U.C. secretary, W.H. Andrews, with an I.C.U. deputation. At the last moment, under pressure from the cabinet, he withdrew his invitation to the I.C.U., though not to Andrews. Since, however, the telegram from the Minister's secretary to the I.C.U. announcing the change in plan reached its office late in the afternoon, Ballinger decided to pretend that it had arrived after the office had closed and to present himself with Kadalie and two other I.C.U. officials at the time already arranged. Keeping close behind Andrews, the intruders got into the postmaster's office, where the interview was to take place, before anyone realised what was happening. Once they were in, Madeley could not bring himself to turn them out.⁽¹⁾ In the face of his apparent defiance and unimpressed by the argument that he had dealt, not with the I.C.U., but with the T.U.C., the Prime Minister demanded his resignation and, as this was refused, reconstituted his cabinet without Madeley, whom he replaced by another Labour Party man, H.W. Sampson.

I.C.U. sympathisers acclaimed the cabinet crisis as a signal victory. "How thrilling," wrote Shirley Cripps, "the news about

1. W.G. Ballinger: Winifred Holtby - first contacts with South Africa; W.G. Ballinger: Mr. Madeley and the I.C.U., n.d. (B/UCT).

Mr. Madeley has been! May God defend the Right!!! ...",⁽¹⁾ whatever he meant by that. While undoubtedly the expulsion of Madeley was the outcome of a conflict of views within the Government upon the desirability of encouraging black trade unions and, more particularly, upon the character and worth of the I.C.U., the clash of principles was obscured by squalid intrigue within the Labour Party. The I.C.U. blundered into a domestic political argument that was concerned with the relations between the South African Labour Party and its parliamentary representatives and that had much to do also with struggles for office.⁽²⁾ Even for the I.C.U. it was a nine day wonder. "Although," Ballinger said later, "the incident gained wide publicity and sensational headlines in the newspapers it only aroused luke-warm interest among the members of the I.C.U."⁽³⁾ While it is

1. A.S. Cripps to C. Kadalie 14th November, 1928 (B/Wits).

2. Col. Creswell was opposed to Madeley's appointment in the first place, according to Harry Haynes, the veteran Labour leader, who considered that the latter's expulsion was "surely the dirtiest incident in the political history of a country not altogether free of dirty incidents." (The Natal Advertiser 18th June, 1931). The reasons for the expulsion accepted by the National Council of the Labour Party were embodied in a resolution as follows:-

"In the opinion of the National Council, the Hon. W.B. Madeley has been expelled from the Cabinet on account of his persistent endeavours to maintain and raise the standard of living of the civilised worker, as exemplified particularly when he increased the wages of the unskilled workers in his own department to 8/- per day - in marked contrast with the low wages pertaining in the department (sic) of other Ministers. The Council congratulate Mr. Madeley on showing that there are in the Movement to-day men who will sacrifice personal profit for principle. The Council endorses the action of Mr. Madeley took (sic) in upholding the principle of collective bargaining ..." (Karovsky Papers: Minutes of the National Council of the S.A.L.P. 11th November, 1928). These data have been very kindly furnished by Mr. D. Ticktin.

3. W.G. Ballinger: Winifred Holtby and Africa.

true that the postal authorities agreed to discuss grievances with an ad hoc deputation of workers⁽¹⁾ and a number of small improvements were introduced into the working conditions at the post office, Madeley's successor persisted in the Government's refusal to negotiate with the I.C.U. and ignored Andrews's somewhat provocative demands that he should deal with the T.U.C. The T.U.C. secretary virtually accused the parliamentary Labour Party of betraying the labour movement.

"My Council would like to know whether this is the considered policy of your Department and if it has decided not to recognise the T.U.C. in a matter which has been placed in its hands by an organised body of trade unionists ... The recognition of trade unions has been a plank in the platform of the Labour movement for many years and my Council cannot believe that you have departed from your lifelong principles. It urges you ... to recognise the Trade Union Congress as a competent body to represent the interests of the trade union workers who are employed by your Department." (2)

Since the Government's view was precisely that the I.C.U. was not "an organised body of trade unionists", Mr. Sampson could argue that his lifelong principles were unimpaired.

The post office dispute coincided with a renewed attempt by the I.C.U. Head Office to come to terms with Natal, where, in Durban and perhaps elsewhere too, the I.C.U. proper and Champion's break-away Union (the I.C.U. yase Natal) ran rival offices. At the beginning of July Champion, who had been invited to meet the expected Adviser, as well as the National Council Sub-Committee,⁽³⁾ declined

1. The Star 20th November, 1928.

2. I.C.U. News letter 5th December, 1928.

3. The invitation was renewed by telegram after Ballinger's arrival in Johannesburg, when Champion was asked to bring with him "a limited number of his colleagues". (A.W.G. Champion to W.G. Ballinger 21st July, 1928, B/Wits).

to do so and issued a counter-invitation to Ballinger to go to Natal. He, however, could not afford the time to travel to Pietermaritzburg or Durban as suggested, while Champion, either because he was not seriously considering reunification, or because he was filled with anger and distrust for Kadalie,⁽¹⁾ or because he too could not afford the time and money when his own organisation was in difficulties, refused to budge.⁽²⁾ An intermittent correspondence continued, Champion's letters sometimes suggesting reconciliation. It is difficult to believe that the I.C.U. yase Natal was serious in its protestations of a desire for reunion. Negotiations, in which Ballinger, Kadalie and Champion participated, opened at Durban in November, 1928, but proved abortive. As they were broken off for the flimsiest of reasons, the inescapable conclusion is that they were merely a pious gesture in the direction of African unity. At the end of November Champion was accusing Ballinger of being a Communist.⁽³⁾ In the meantime the Cowley suit against the I.C.U. had been heard, the Union's properties sold and Cowley recompensed.⁽⁴⁾

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1. "I am not able to advise the Governing body of the I.C.U. yase Natal to be jimcrowed in any way. I do not see the advisability of myself and my colleagues to go to Johannesburg to meet the Subcommittee and discuss the Natal Secession after a lot of lies have been circulated without the slightest respect for our feelings." (Ibid).
 2. A.W.G. Champion to W.G. Ballinger 26th July, 1928 (B/Wits).
 3. The Natal Advertiser 28th November, 1928. There seems some doubt whether Champion really knew what he wanted to do. As Mrs. Palmer said: "Poor Champion, he is butting about in all directions like a bull with a sore head." (M. Palmer to W.G. Ballinger 29th November, 1928, B/Wits).
 4. "Natal properties were sold a few weeks ago for approx. £3000. All swallowed by legal sharks ... Champion has as usual been assisting the lawyers. The Durban properties went for £1,600. Messrs. Cowley ... took the major part of £1,200 and Champion appealed for the balance of £400, but was refused." (W.G. Ballinger to W. Holtby 19th December, 1928, B/UCT).

In the early period of their partnership Kadalie and Ballinger appeared to get along famously, each complimenting the other in letters to Winifred Holtby and Creech Jones. As the months went by their relationship showed signs of strain. Not only did Ballinger determine policy, he also repeatedly said that the bad old times were over, that the era of moderation, honesty and serious purpose had opened.⁽¹⁾ In spite of his pledge "to in every way assist in carrying out the instructions" of the Adviser, Kadalie was increasingly restive. Compelled to account for every penny he spent, humiliatingly dependent upon his own Adviser for an allowance, he found his position of subordination less and less endurable. Suddenly, in October, 1928, unable to contain himself any longer, he launched out, in a speech at Lichtenburg, Transvaal, into a bitter attack on the Prime Minister. The white liberals were appalled, not only by the attack itself, but also by its most inopportune timing. For, after considerable preparation, the I.C.U., in collaboration with the Joint Council of Natives and Europeans, the African National Congress and the Trade Union Congress, was on the point of securing the reception by General Hertzog, as Minister of Native Affairs, of a deputation aiming at achieving some mitigation of the harsher and less reasonable aspects of the pass laws. Dr. Brookes wrote an angry letter remonstrating with Kadalie, Mrs. Lewis an apologetic one to Hertzog, dissociating herself from his "but-rageous speech".⁽²⁾ "Each time recently", she wrote, "that he has

1. People "should not judge the movement by some of its old leaders, who went about the country breathing fire and murder". (W.G. Ballinger to the Conference of Superintendents of Native Locations at Bloemfontein, The Star 15th November, 1928).

2. E. Lewis to General Hertzog 1st November, 1928 (B/UCT).

spoken violently, it is nothing but brandy that has so fatally inspired him."⁽¹⁾ She begged the Prime Minister not to judge by Kadalie's behaviour the "good and decent men in the I.C.U. office, chafing at this public flouting and ruination of all their laudable efforts to maintain a moderate native organisation ... impatiently hoping that Kadalie by his own free will will soon relieve them of this step of repudiating him, which would be so repugnant to faithful native coworkers who have propped up and-shielded him for so long ... and have made strenuous efforts to save him from his own weaknesses." The continued existence of the I.C.U. was essential as "a sort of blow-hole that will do no harm to the whites but be a means of actual safety, and at the same time be a very great relief to the black worker." As before, Mrs. Lewis reminded her correspondent that, unstable as he was, Kadalie was better than the Communists, and she urged him again "to see Mr. Ballinger before it is too late and give him the benefit of your confidence in his work out here, which he was on the point of giving up early this week."⁽²⁾

On this occasion the General Secretary was brought to heel and induced to tender an apology,⁽³⁾ bombarded as he was by admonitory letters from London and Lovedale⁽⁴⁾ and, no doubt, by advice from

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1. There is plenty of evidence - not all of it hostile - that Kadalie was drinking heavily and that he continued to do so for the next ten years. (C. Kadalie: My Life and the I.C.U., p.193; African Drum June, 1952, p.33).
 2. Two months later Mrs. Lewis was writing to Smuts, who had called the I.C.U. "mischievous". She bemoaned "this set-back from the leader of the S.A.P., the natives' only hope" after "a three years' struggle to make friends for the natives powerful enough to keep them safe from the Communist influence". (E. Lewis to General Smuts 16th January, 1929, B/Wits).
 3. The Times 27th December, 1928.
 4. E. Lewis to Gen. Hertzog 1st November, 1928 (B/UCT); J. Harrison to E. Lewis 4th December, 1928 (B/UCT). Miss Holtby thought the news about Kadalie was "sickening". (W. Holtby to E. Lewis 3rd December, 1928, B/Wits).

closer quarters and perhaps by the urgings of his own colleagues.⁽¹⁾

In November Kadalie asked for six weeks' leave for domestic reasons and, after unsuccessfully applying for permission to spend his leave in Mocambique, went off to Natal with some money that Ballinger had succeeded in borrowing for him as advance salary.⁽²⁾ Though due to resume work on 7th January, 1929, he actually returned to duty on the second, in order to participate in the National Council meeting scheduled for 4th and 5th January at Bloemfontein. On 4th January he submitted to the Council a written request for a year's leave of absence, during which, however, he offered his services for "propaganda work". The verbal explanation he then gave, so the Ballinger account ran, was that "he anticipated trouble and legal proceedings against him by his wife; and it was his desire that, when such matters came up before the public eye, he should not be officially connected with the Organisation". He then made, the Ballinger version continues, "a long confession, in the midst of which he broke down in a gush of tears. The Council was very sorry

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1. The Administrative, Organising and Financial Secretaries, I.C.U. to the Presidents, Provincial Secretaries, Branch Secretaries and Committees, and all the Members of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of Africa 13th February, 1929 - Mr. Clements Kadalie and his Resignation (B/UCT).
 2. "Later we learned that he went to Natal and took with him a Colored (sic) woman, with whom he is still living. During his absence his wife and family were evicted from their home. His wife came to me for assistance. On his return Kadalie complained that by helping his wife I was interfering between them ..." (W.G. Ballinger to W. Citrine 8th May, 1929, B/UCT). Kadalie married his first wife, Molly (also a Coloured woman), in Cape Town in his early years in South Africa. His second wife, Eva, he met at Greytown in Natal in 1926 when she was still a schoolgirl. (African Drum June, 1952).

to learn of his difficulties and thought it well of him to wish to avoid besmirching the Union with such matters, connected with his private life, as he had related. At this meeting the General Secretary was given the twelve months' leave asked for, on half pay, and it was agreed he would, as far as possible, continue to assist in propaganda work during his holiday. After his return from the Conference, Mr. Kadalie never visited the Head Office except when he came to ask for money ..."(1)

"I see", said Creech Jones, "you have sent Kadalie off for a period." (2) It seemed a satisfactory arrangement (though it is difficult to see that a scandal in the private life of a general secretary on half pay doing part-time propaganda work would have besmirched the I.C.U. less than a scandal involving a full-time, full pay general secretary): Kadalie, an ever growing embarrassment to the Union, was apparently disposed of for the time, perhaps for good, quietly and without fuss. Fuss, however, there was to be. For Kadalie was not the man to make a decorous withdrawal. In a letter to the President of the I.C.U., which he issued to the press before his colleagues had seen it, the General Secretary proffered his resignation, ^{from the Union} because he could not "subscribe to its present policy of servitude, as conducted by those now at the head of affairs." He may also have been influenced by the dismissal, after the National Council meeting, of his old friend Tyamzashe, apparently as the result of a petty squabble about money, though

1. Mr. Clements Kadalie and his Resignation (B/UCT).

2. A. Creech Jones to W.G. Ballinger 10th January, 1929 (B/Wits).

Tyamzashe himself complained of a plot concocted by Bennet Gwabini,⁽¹⁾ who seemed to be one of the I.C.U. men most trusted by Ballinger and most detested by the Kadalie group, detested with justice, perhaps, since he appears to have taken a spiteful pleasure in humiliating Kadalie.⁽²⁾ In the course of an interview with a newspaper reporter Kadalie enlarged upon his repudiation of the Ballinger policy.

"I founded the I.C.U., built it up and I have no regret in handing it over to those who are now pursuing a policy which is diametrically opposed to that which was adopted, and re-affirmed consistently year after year by the annual congress of the organisation. I maintain we have always wanted, and now more than ever, a fighting policy ... We were, for example, to approach the Government asking for the suspension of the Pass Law for six months, and if that were not conceded we were to have protest demonstrations throughout the Union,⁽³⁾ the members to burn their passes in public. The Native Administration Act was another measure that was to be tackled by the union, and there again nothing was done. In April last, Congress, in session at Bloemfontein, framed a political and economic programme which has been ignored by headquarters." ⁽⁴⁾

He went on to object to "certain business" of the I.C.U. "being relegated to a coterie of Europeans and natives who assembled in the Bantu Men's Social Centre," a reference to a meeting held there by the pass laws conference the previous year. As the Ballinger group justly pointed out, this conference, to which the A.N.C. as well as the I.C.U. had been a party, virtually superseded the joint Bloemfontein decision.⁽⁵⁾

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1. H.D. Tyamzashe to A.W.G. Champion 13th February, 1929 (F 1929/1). Tyamzashe alleged that Gwabini's wife was an illicit liquor dealer. His main object in writing to Champion was evidently to try and borrow £3 from him. "Never mind", he said, "if I attack you in the press or platform. That cannot make us social enemies." A postscript reads: "I have seized all my office furniture in lieu of wages owed. I have sold the desks but am keeping the typewriter! I want to teach Ballinger and these other stiffes."
 2. Cf. interchange of letters between Gwabini and Kadalie in March, 1929, about office furniture. (B/Wits).
 3. The Union of South Africa.
 4. The Star 25th January, 1929.
 5. Mr. Clements Kadalie and his Resignation.

Asked what he intended to do next, Kadalie replied,

"My plans are very modest. I intend, in the first place, to interest myself in the affairs of the natives in this country from Rhodesia and East Africa - many of them are my own countrymen. They are now being deported illegally in my opinion - and, in the circumstances, I consider they must be protected. I intend to organise these natives and form a body which will affiliate with the African National Congress ... I will hire an office in the course of a few days, and there they can consult me about their grievances. As a matter of fact, they have already approached me on the matter, and requested me to form an organisation in their interests, with the view of testing the legality of the present deportations. In the light of the failure of the authorities to deport me, I am convinced that these East African natives cannot be legally sent out of South Africa." (1)

Ballinger, invited to comment on Kadalie's resignation, declared, "The resignation does not surprise me, but it is a damp squib." Prophetically he continued, "It is a wonder Kadalie did not go on to say that all the officials are 'good boys' - his favourite term of reproach - that they are under the influence of the joint councils, have been bought by the Chamber of Mines, and will shortly occupy offices in the Corner House." (2)

Putting aside his modest plans of organising his fellow-countrymen, Kadalie followed up his resignation with a series of attacks upon his former colleagues, in speeches at Johannesburg, Bloemfontein and elsewhere. In Bloemfontein he was accompanied by trimmer Maduna, who accused Ballinger of dictatorship. This was the charge Kadalie himself made at a meeting of the Reef branches on Sunday 10th February, when as many as a thousand people heard him complain that he had received no pay since the previous November. In the course of his speech the ex-Secretary-General framed the accusation that was to be the burden of the threnody of the succeeding months:

1. The Star 25th January, 1929.

2. Ibid.

"Our present policy is dictated by the Joint Council of Europeans and Natives." He then went on to inform the audience that he would resume the general-secretaryship on Wednesday 13th February and bring in a new executive.⁽¹⁾ It is doubtful whether he had consulted his proposed new officials - Lujiza, who in fact succeeded him as General Secretary, La Guma, who had been bundled out of the I.C.U. in December, 1926, and Modiakgotla, who was another of those who came out in support of Ballinger. Of the others, Tyamzashe, of course, could be reckoned on. The remaining three, Mbeki, Maduna and 'Mote were all unreliable and scarcely an acquisition. In any case nothing came of it. Instead of storming the I.C.U. offices, Kadalie got drunk and was arrested.⁽²⁾

Kadalie's gibe that Ballinger was the puppet of the Joint Council, it need hardly be said, was absurd. It was the General Secretary himself who had been instrumental in opening the door to Joint Council influence⁽³⁾ and the post-Ballinger policy of the I.C.U. was only what he himself had advocated on his return from Europe, differing only in being more consistently prosecuted. The truth of the

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1. "I think you must have read in the press what hell Kadalie gave Ballinger on Sunday at the Workers' Hall ... He spoke for three hours during which time he gave Ballinger, Gwabini, Nolutshungu and Kokozela some hell. Not one of these political mugwumps had the pluck to attend - they would have been assaulted ... The people want to know why Smith, de Norman, Maduna, Kadalie, Mbeki, Tyamzashe and 'Mote were out of the I.C.U." (H.D. Tyamzashe to A.W.G. Champion 13th February, 1929, F 1929/1).
 2. Mr. Clements Kadalie and his resignation (B/UCT); Minutes of meeting of the Sub-Committee of the National Council of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union, held in the I.C.U. Workers' Hall, 14, Market Street, in Johannesburg, on Thursday, February 28th, 1929 (F 1929/2).
 3. "You will be glad to hear ... that his relationship with the Joint Council has improved very greatly since you saw him. And Mr. Pim is very often sought out by him for help and advice." (E. Lewis to Lord Olivier 20th June, 1928, (B/Wits)).

matter was that his resentment was not founded in policy at all. For he did not much care what I.C.U. policy was, provided that it was bold and imaginative and, most important, under his own direction. Nor was his real grievance the patently untrue complaint that he had not been paid for three months, while the rest of Head Office had. As he said, with pardonable exaggeration, he had "founded" the I.C.U., built it up", and now most certainly did regret losing control through a take-over bid by the share-holders he himself had brought into the organisation, a regret shared by many rank-and-file members who did not take kindly to white interference.⁽¹⁾

On 13th February three of the remaining officials - Bennet Gwabini (Administrative Secretary), Joe Kokozela (Organising Secretary) and Geddes Nolutshungu (Financial Secretary) - circulated a letter (in which Ballinger's hand is to be detected) to all the officers and members of the I.C.U. as a riposte to Kadalie's attacks, accusing him of habitual lying ("... truth has never been his forte"), neglect of duty ("... for three months prior to his resignation he had been neglecting his duties and hardly anything could be done with him"), drunkenness ("... reeling under the influence of liquor, he so impertinently vilified the Prime Minister"), ingratitude ("... his bail had to be paid by a kind friend of the race he had so basely attacked"), extravagance and selfishness ("... almost all the funds went to make up one individual's salary") and even theft ("... some officials were in the habit, when

1. "There was no more reference to Mr. Kadalie's work in the newspapers: all the credit went to Mr. Ballinger." (Minutes of meeting of the Sub-Committee of the National Council, 28th February, 1929, F 1929/2).

visiting branches, of collecting all available funds and pocketing them: ... the General Secretary's safe had been broken open (!) and an amount of £18 ... had been stolen. The statement of accounts, however, could not be got from the General Secretary: ... It appeared that certain monies - approximately £50 - had specially been collected for a printing plant, but no trace of them could be found").⁽¹⁾

On Sunday 24th February, a meeting of the members of the Reef branches, summoned by A.P. Maduna, styling himself Organising Secretary (a claim that subsequently gave rise to a good deal of dispute), on behalf of Kadalie, (styled General Secretary, in spite of his resignation) resolved to instal the latter in the I.C.U. Transvaal provincial and Johannesburg branch office in Small Market Street and to instruct branches not to centralise their funds to Head Office. Next day Kadalie, Tyamzashe, and Maduna moved in. Gwabini, Kadalie's *bête noir*, ordered them to move out again and, when they failed to comply, took legal action.⁽²⁾

A confrontation between the General Secretary and his Adviser took place at a special meeting of the National Council Sub-Committee in Johannesburg on 28th February under the chairmanship of the Senior Vice-President, A.M. Jabavu, who threatened to call in the police if there were any disturbance. Present were Gwabini, Kokozela and Nolutshungu, Lujiza (Acting General Secretary), Modiakgotla (Complaints and Research Secretary) and Ballinger, all of Head Office, with provincial secretaries E.K. Nhlapo and Phoofolo.

Kadalie

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1. Mr. Clements Kadalie and his Resignation.
 2. Minutes of meeting of the Sub-Committee of the National Council, 28th February, 1929 (F 1929/2).

apparently uninvited, was accompanied by Tyamzashe. It was agreed to permit the attendance, in addition, of newspaper reporters, a number of minor I.C.U. officials, and members of the public, mostly I.C.U. branch secretaries and members. After a preliminary constitutional quibble by Kadalie, which hinged on whether or not Nolutshungu, another of his bêtes noires, was really Financial Secretary or only a bookkeeper, and a request by him that Tyamzashe and Maduna, as members of the National Council, should be allowed to participate in the deliberations, which was granted in the case of Tyamzashe, but evidently not in the case of Maduna, the Sub-Committee, its composition much enlarged beyond its normal size, proceeded with its first item of business, the reception of a deputation from the Reef branches. A memorandum submitted by the deputation complained that Kadalie had been contemptuously treated, attacked in the European press by Head Office ("of which Mr. W.G. Ballinger is the Adviser, surrounded by Four Blank Walls and a courtege of irresponsible youths"), and arrested, together with Tyamzashe and Maduna, for trespassing on I.C.U. property; that Tyamzashe had been wrongfully dismissed from The Workers' Herald; and that members going to Head Office - including the post office workers - had been treated with discourtesy. In conclusion it said,

"We maintain that ... unless a rigid change is made at the Head Office, which will include the removal of the Adviser, Mr. W.G. Ballinger, who is now nothing but a stupid dictator and betrayer of this noble movement, the Witwatersrand branches and, we are sure, the majority of the I.C.U. branches throughout the country, will cease to recognise the National Council and the Head Office. In other words: BALLINGER MUST GO."

Ballinger, not without cause, took advantage of an otherwise rambling discussion to remind one of the members of the deputation, P.F. Sijadu, who it was that had stood bail for him when arrested under the Native Administration Act.

In the course of the afternoon the Sub-Committee concluded its hearing of the deputation's case and took up the business on its agenda, firstly discussing the General Secretary's resignation. Gwabini led the prosecution. After reviewing what had taken place since the National Council meeting in Bloemfontein at the beginning of January, he summarised the case against Kadalie.

"Summing up, the comrade has violated the constitution in all manner of ways, has conveyed to the public and members generally that the National Council has no power, has told the people to violate the rules of the organisation by not complying with the constitution and generally placing the movement in a state of degradation, and it is for the members here present to discuss on these lines."

In his statement of defence and in answers to questions put to him Kadalie chose to deal with trivialities rather than make a declaration of defiance or of repentance: Maduna had never been dismissed from the post of Organising Secretary; he had a perfect right to use official notepaper for his propaganda work; he had been refused money to travel to Pietermaritzburg for propaganda purposes; he had not been drunk at the time of his arrest for disturbing the peace; he had used the Johannesburg branch office in the interests of the organisation, "sending out circulars instructing secretaries to continue centralising in terms of the constitution".⁽¹⁾ He alleged that Ballinger, Gwabini and the Joint Council had conspired to oust him from the leadership by trapping him into taking what was really indefinite leave.

1. "Mr. Modiakgotla: 'How does Mr. Kadalie reconcile the two circulars - the first asking branches not to centralise; and the second, instructing them to centralise?' 'I called the meeting, but I do not associate myself with their resolutions. I told the meeting I was not going to be a party to that resolution.' 'Is it not true that Kadalie was acting in conjunction with the resolutions of that meeting when he opened at the branch office?' No answer."

"Finally I contend that if I want to return to work there is no reason to call another meeting or seek anybody's approval,(2) unless you want me to understand that the National Council had ulterior motives when it gave me leave last Conference at Bloemfontein. I am not, however, keen on returning to the I.C.U. I can do better outside the organisation, but I am willing to return to the work if the people want me."

He disclaimed any intention of starting a rival organisation.(2)

Altogether, even granted that the account used here emanated from the Ballinger camp, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Kadalie put up a faltering and unconvincing apologia.

Ballinger then spoke and, like Kadalie, with pardonable exaggeration. "When I left Britain, the friends who sponsored my appointment, as well as myself, fully believed I was coming to a union of very strong financial standing." (Did Mrs. Lewis, Miss Holtby and Arthur Creech Jones really believe this?) The Adviser went on to accuse Kadalie, in plain terms or by implication, of lies, extravagances and dishonesty. He concluded,

"If Kadalie had taken my advice - to get out on propaganda work and keep a straight life - the whole thing would have been settled. He knows, on the other hand, that if he had been in a European trade union he would never have come back ... I have said it to Mr. Kadalie, and I would repeat it here, 'Take assistance from anybody - Joint Council or anyone else - who is willing to give it.' Misleading speeches, like burning up of passes, etc. were doing nobody any good. I ask you to forget all about these squabbles and decide what you are going to do. I have never been a dictator in the I.C.U."

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1. "Mr. Modiakgotla: 'Did Kadalie report to his employers, the National Council, when he wanted to resume duties?' 'I reported to members of the National Council.' 'Did you get any replies from them?' 'Only one, from Comrade Skweyiya; but replies and other letters of mine have been received at Head Office and not passed to me.'"
 2. "Mr. Modiakgotla: 'Why does Kadalie call men who are outside the organisation to assist him?' 'I did it in order to combat the secession spirit. Champion was depending on Maduna and 'Mote, and I wanted to use the same men against Champion himself.'"

But it was Lujiza who, leaving aside the generalities and the trivialities, stated with succinctness the gravamen: Kadalie had resigned through the press, withdrawn his resignation "without reference to anybody", and "had worked the branches against the Head Office."

At length Gwabini, brought to the point by Jabavu in the course of a further denunciation, moved Kadalie's dismissal. But, while, on the one hand, no one, it is clear, was prepared even then for such drastic action, on the other hand the Sub-Committee wanted a decision, and therefore Jabavu would not accept a motion by Modiakgotla that Kadalie still be considered to be on leave (since the National Council had not received his resignation) and that the question be postponed to a future Congress. With some tact and generosity Kadalie spared his colleagues embarrassment by re-submitting his resignation, reserving his "right to appeal to the Annual Congress".

Chairman: "What are you going to appeal against, if you tender your resignation yourself?" Kadalie: "Well, I withdraw my appeal and only tender my resignation." Still reluctant to sever the ties, Jabavu and Modiakgotla tried - unsuccessfully - to persuade Kadalie to continue his propaganda work. "Although it is rather painful", said Lujiza, "especially as we are not a full National Council, I move that the resignation be accepted". Kokozela seconded and the motion was carried. The I.C.U. agreed to take responsibility for a debt that Kadalie had incurred in his official position, and to withdraw the trespass charge. Thus ended an association that had lasted just over ten years.

Before dispersing the Sub-Committee suspended Keable 'Mote, who was plotting a Free State secession, and agreed upon a Union

conference at Kroonstad in June, "if funds allowed". The meeting closed with a vote of thanks to Nolutshungu (proposed by Ballinger) and a vote of thanks and "a pledge of loyalty" to the Adviser.⁽¹⁾

It was not to be expected that the Reef supporters of Kadalie would be satisfied with the proceedings of the Sub-Committee, nor surprising that on 13th March the branch executives met to express their dissatisfaction, resolving to summon a special congress of dissident branches in Bloemfontein at Easter (1st April). As an immediate measure they decided to secede and form an Independent I.C.U. under the leadership of Kadalie, supported by a committee which included Thomas Mbeki.⁽²⁾ In a letter to officials and members of the I.C.U. Kadalie gave his version of "the true causes of the unhappy position of the present organisation". Mistakes, he admitted, had been made by the I.C.U. leaders, "particularly in dealing with the financial side. As one of the founders this was realised by me long before the present angels who are singing their own praises"; hence the request in England for an adviser. But what did they get? Ballinger, whose "chief object when he arrived in this country appeared to be to obtain advisers for himself particularly selecting them from the Joint Council. The composition of the Joint Council is well known to you. It is mainly composed of political failures in African public life and the nominees of the

1. Minutes of meeting of the Sub-Committee of the National Council, 28th February, 1929 (F 1929/2).

2. 'Mote imitated the Johannesburg example and founded an Independent Coloured Workers' Union in the Orange Free State (B. Gwabini to A.W.G. Champion 13th March, 1929, F 1929/3), but he subsequently threw in his lot again with Kadalie, as did Maduna, who had previously deserted to Champion and who now became Assistant General Secretary of the Independent I.C.U.

bosses - namely the Chamber of Mines ... It is a well known fact that the Joint Council, as well as the Chamber of Mines, before Mr. Ballinger came, had no good word for us. We were wicked bad boys and agitators in their estimation. Mr. Ballinger was approached to do away with me". As for the Sub-Committee of 28th February, convened by "Ballinger and his youngsters",

"I appeared at the Committee to answer grave charges against me. I was only given ten minutes to reply to those charges. Ten minutes given to a man who worked for the I.C.U. the last ten years! It was resolved that I should be dismissed ... The Chairman frequently said he would call the police to have me arrested when I wanted to interject when my jurors were pronouncing death sentence on me ... The death sentence was clearly passed on me and, as an honourable man, I sent in my resignation."

With an eye to an alliance with Mote and, more particularly, Champion (though he was already claiming the support of "the entire Free State and Natal") he promised that control of the Independent I.C.U. would be "Provincial instead of Central as hitherto in so far as the Administration of funds, and the property of the Organisation, are concerned. A fixed and small proportion of subscriptions only to be allocated to the upkeep of a Central Office". With an eye to the rural African he promised a land scheme to be fully worked out at the proposed Easter conference. He concluded:

"The enemies are at work. They want to destroy Trade Unionism amongst the African Workers ... I have served my people to the best of my ability. With your support and co-operation during that time we aroused our people to action. Our exploiters trembled at the very word I.C.U. The policy of our enemies at present is to make this once great movement in this (sic) a Good-Boy organisation ... The pioneers of the movement have been systematically driven out and replaced by men whose names are not known. Yea, these pioneers are being replaced by weaklings ..." (1)

1. T. Mbeki, Provisional Secretary, I.I.C.U., to Executives and Members of the I.C.U., 13th March, 1929 (B/UCT); C. Kadalie to Executives and Members of the I.C.U. 13th March, 1929 (B/UCT).

To discredit Kadalie, the I.C.U. Issued, on 14th March, a statement of his expenditure on his European tour of 1927. This revealed no conspicuous scandals, simply indifference to the requirements of accountability and gross extravagance at a time when hundreds of I.C.U. members whose subscriptions had paid for the trip were homeless and destitute. During seven months (28th April to 25th November, 1927) the then National Secretary had gone through, excluding his salary of £30 a month, £50 for lectures in Austria and Germany, and £40 in unpaid loans (mostly from Winifred Holtby), £723.10.11, none of which was accounted for by receipts, only by Kadalie's own statement, and not always by that. A good deal of it, however, had been spent on I.C.U. business, on such items as office rent, typing, postage and telegrams, and much travelling and hotel accommodation.⁽¹⁾

Kadalie's rejoinder (of 15th March) was vague, evasive and irrelevant.

"My total expenses in Europe amounts (sic) to £537⁽²⁾ - as varieified (sic) by my diary and accounts ... The statement draws attention to the fact that certain moneys were expended for entertainment. It should not be difficult to realise that expenditure of this nature was, in view of the nature of my visit to Europe necessary and it would be interesting to hear from Mr. Ballinger as what I.C.U. moneys were spent in entertaining him on his arrival in this country.

"The statement does not appear to have drawn the attention to the most expensive item of my tour to Europe so far as the

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1. Details of expenditure - Postage £20.10.0., Telegrams and cables £23.13.0, Hotels £126.17.4, Clothing, suits, etc. £24.11.1, Wages for typists in London £26.17.0, Rent of offices £19.13.4, Newspapers £5.0.6, Affiliation books (for the International Federation of Trade Unions) and photographs £57.12.10, Taxis £25.10.6, Camera and gramophone records £7.16.6, Travelling expenses £36.19.6, Theatres £6.19.0, Railway fares £117.10.7, Miscellaneous (including stationery) £22.10.6. Total expenditure - £577.6.0 (including £40 in returned loans). This leaves £146.5.11 of the £723.11.11 unaccounted for. (Financial statement on European tour of Clements Kadalie, 14th March, 1929, F 1929/5).
 2. This seems to be the £577.6.0 above - total expenditure accounted for, less £40 in repaid loans.

"I.C.U. is concerned, namely the importation of Mr. Ballinger himself, which has resulted in the defection of literally thousands of members with a corresponding loss of unity apart from the financial loss involved.

"... I refrained from mentioning during my speeches on my experiences in England the colour prejudice that exists in London and Edinburgh. For two successive nights I was in search of hotels in London and I had to hire a taxi for which I paid £1.10.0d. As a matter of fact I was stranded for two nights on one occasion and I had to sit at a Coffee Stall until 6 o'clock in the morning ... In sunny South Africa, Mr. Ballinger can get accommodation in Native territories without any difficulty." (1)

After issuing this, Kadalie, accompanied by Maduna, made his way to the Orange Free State to team up with 'Mote and to capture the I.C.U. branches there. Thither he was followed by Ballinger, who held meetings at the same places and, on one occasion, at the same time as a pro-Kadalie meeting.⁽²⁾ Neither protagonist seems to have had much success. At an open-air meeting at Heilbron, where he appeared with 'Mote and Maduna, Kadalie was reported as having had so hostile a reception from his audience that in the end he could not be heard. He left behind him a new Independent I.C.U. branch and a legacy of factionalism.⁽³⁾ However, he went ahead with his Bloemfontein conference, which fifty delegates attended, though it is impossible to tell whether these represented any substantial body of opinion.

1. C. Kadalie to Executives and Members of the I.C.U. 15th March, 1929 (B/UCT). Kadalie reverts to the subject of his European expenditure in his autobiography, being at pains to point out his expenses. (C. Kadalie: My Life and the I.C.U., p.114,116, 140-141).

2. This was at Viljoenskroon, where a meeting held by Ballinger and Henderson Binda, Provincial Secretary of the Orange Free State, clashed with a meeting held by Maduna. It seems to have caused little embarrassment and the proceedings went off without dissension. (Ballinger's Speech at Viljoenskroon, n.d., B/Wits).

3. The Friend 26th March, 1929.

Both sides in the dispute appealed to sympathisers in England. The arguments advanced were the familiar ones.

"... Ballinger has disappointed thousands of the African proletariat who looked to him for sound advice. With the backing of the Chamber of Mines and the Joint Council, he adroitly worked for the removal of comrade Clements Kadalie from the General Secretaryship of the I.C.U., the result is that he is already deserted by our people. All over the country Branches are determined to support Kadalie, because they are quite convinced that the old I.C.U. is sold to the capitalist class. All African workers are against any co-operation between the Joint Council-Chamber of Mines (sic) ..." (1)

Congratulations were sent to Ramsay Macdonald for the success of the Labour Party in the 1929 elections, and also to Fenner Brockway. There were still hopes of the intervention of the British labour movement in South Africa. "We rejoice at the accession of the Labour Party to power, for to us a subject nation it means a vigorous League of Nations to watch over our interests in exploited Africa; while on the other hand the African Trade Union Movement will receive official recognition from a British Government." (2)

The likelihood of intervention in South Africa by the British Labour Party or the T.U.C. was as remote as that of British socialists accepting Kadalie's version of events in the I.C.U. For in his turn Ballinger was accusing Kadalie of having been autocratic, extravagant, demagogic and inept.

"Soon after I took charge of the I.C.U. finances it was evident that the new system of departmental control was not to the liking of the I.C.U. Gen. Sec'y. The insistence of (sic) vouchers for all expenditure revealed extraordinary cash disbursements, under propaganda headings.

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1. T. Mbeki, Transvaal Provisional Secretary, Independent I.C.U. to A. Creech Jones 19th March, 1929.
 2. New Africa 29th June, 1929 (/UCT).

"The car was costing £40 per month for petrol. It was used almost exclusively by the Gen. Sec'y for 'joy-riding'. Ex-members complained that 'that was where their monies went - Motor, Women & Brandy'. One usually discounts title-tattle (sic) from ex-members but the fact that no Financial Statement of I.C.U. affairs has been presented since 1926 justifies dissatisfaction. Conference after conference has demanded Audited Financial Statements, but on various pretexts Kadalie has evaded an explanation ... If insisting on decisions made by properly constituted committees is dictatorial then I have committed an offence. I claim that the I.C.U. is now democratically governed ... In the past the members have been fed on promises and racial tirades ... Undoubtedly Kadalie has not been able to subordinate self to the great ideal of African emancipation. He has visualised a Trade Union chieftainship ..." (1)

Those in England were dismayed and disappointed, but anxious not to betray any hint of racial prejudice. "It is", wrote Walter Citrine to Ballinger, "a heartless story of deception, the more heartless because of the trust and confidence reposed in him.

"When Kadalie came to Great Britain he was welcomed here, and although the difficulties of the situation in respect of the organisation of the coloured workers and the white workers in separate organisations were fully realised, Kadalie was given sound advice, and the hand of Trade Union brotherhood was extended to him.

"I say I am not surprised at the account you give, because even in countries such as Great Britain where the Trades Union movement has become firmly established over generations, there is still to be found occasionally men of the Kadalie type - well-meaning in the early stages, animated by a sincere desire to work on behalf of their fellows - such men occasionally get into office and find themselves for a variety of reasons in deep water. They struggle to cover up their delinquencies, lose their balance and their sense of proportion, and become still further involved. Fortunately the business-like procedure of our British Trade Unions very soon results in the discovery of such people, but nevertheless unpleasant cases of that kind do occur.

"How much greater are the opportunities to confuse the members of such a Union as the I.C.U.!" (2)

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1. W.G. Ballinger to W. Citrine 8th May, 1929 (B/UCT).
 2. W. Citrine to W.G. Ballinger 4th June, 1929.

Throughout Ballinger had the fullest support of his English backers. Arthur Creech Jones attached as much importance to "a sound financial system" and "a high standard of financial integrity"⁽¹⁾ as did Ballinger himself. Dr. Norman Leys, a former Medical Officer of Health in Kenya and a well-known critic of colonial rule, who had met Kadalie in England and was connected with the Holtby-Jones group, wrote:

"All movements towards liberation among Africans fall down flat because of moral failure, and there is no hope for future movements unless rapidly Africans realise that. The first and almost the only desiderata are honest and determined Secretaries and Organisers, who will stand the persecutions that are coming." ⁽²⁾

Leys was in favour of winding the I.C.U. up and starting afresh, a view not shared by Creech Jones.⁽³⁾

Creech Jones also commended the policy of collaboration with the white South African liberals, who, he thought, gave the same sort of help as that received by English trade unions in the 1820's and the 1860's and 1870's.⁽⁴⁾

Kadalie, then, had no more credit to draw on in England. Rather desperately he turned again for support to the extreme left. Help, including financial help, was sought from the League Against Imperialism in Paris. In a letter written in May, 1929, to this

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1. A. Creech Jones to N. Leys 14th February, 1929 (B/UCT).
 2. A. Creech Jones to B. Gwabini 19th February, 1929 (B/Wits).
 3. A. Creech Jones to W.G. Ballinger 20th February, 1929 (B/Wits).
 4. Ibid.

body Kadalie accused Ballinger of having "fraternised with the boss class ... desired us to worship at the shrine of capitalism";⁽¹⁾ and then went on in a similar strain in a later letter: "The Chamber of Mines got hold of him".⁽²⁾ Revolutionary socialism and moderate socialism, both turned a deaf ear, as indeed did most of his old supporters in South Africa. For some time he remained in Johannesburg, where he ran a newspaper New Africa, edited by Tyamzashe and dedicated chiefly to attacking Ballinger, nicknamed "Hubert". Its arguments were hackneyed and absurd, its tone abusive.

"People say ... that 'Hubert' Ballinger's disease of 'stranded-itis' is highly infectious, because Lujiza is also stranded now. And that the creation of so many stranded 'Huberts' will upset the equilibrium of the authorities when they set out to catch the real 'Hubert' in order to put him in the zoo. But, working on the real hypothesis of 'all coons being alike', the whole school of 'Huberts' will find themselves in the zoological gardens."

Less humorously: "It is Ballinger who will be written down in history as the divider and slayer of African workers".⁽³⁾ In a single issue of New Africa⁽⁴⁾ are found: "The bed-fellows of the I.C.U. were the Bantu Men's Social Centre, the Joint Council of Natives and Europeans and the Predikants' Association", "Ballingerism has failed in South Africa in spite of the backing it receives from the Chamber of Mines' organs", and "Ballinger advises his I.C.U. to link up with Communist Party", the last a headline inspired by the announcement that Ballinger was urging co-operation not only with the African National Congress, but also with the South African Federation of Non-European Trade Unions, which was run by Communists.

1. E. Roux: Time Longer than Rope, p.187-188.

2. Ibid, p.188.

3. New Africa 14th September, 1929.

4. 29th June, 1929.

W.G. Ballinger to W. Kolthby: Kadalie's resignation, undated (probably 1929). W.G. Ballinger to W. Kolthby 1st August, 1929. W.G. Ballinger to W. Kolthby 1st August, 1929.

New Africa was also a vehicle for promoting a land scheme.

This appears to have been the brain child of a Johannesburg lawyer, Philip Morris, who was the I.C.U. legal adviser at the beginning of 1929. At least early in 1929 he was trying to persuade Ballinger to help promote such a scheme, then called the Dundee Assyn Kraal Land Scheme, which at that time 'involved 5,000 acres to be purchased for £2 an acre and sold in 10, 7 and 5 acre lots at £2.10s. an acre, £35 down payment, the balance to be paid over seven years at 7½% interest. Morris, who was to put up £2,000, and to make his profit from the transfer fees (apparently £22 for each sale), offered a thousand shares in the company to Ballinger, but he declined to have anything to do with it. Kadalie, on the other hand, did listen to "the 'fairy tales'" of this "solicitor of doubtful antecedents", and Ballinger went so far as to suggest that Morris was behind the formation of the Independent I.C.U., not only intending to use it for pushing the land scheme, but also hoping for rich pickings from the litigation that was an inevitable part of I.C.U. activity. The further allegation was made that this was where the I.I.C.U. money was coming from, a charge that does not seem unreasonable. For how else could Kadalie, who incidentally used Morris's postal box number, have run an office, supported a large staff and subsidised a newspaper? Since the I.C.U. was bankrupt before Ballinger's arrival, there is no reason to suppose that Kadalie was drawing much revenue from what was only a fraction of the old membership, even if the dubious proposition is granted that a return to radical policies revived flagging support. There is equally no ground for believing that the New Africa lost less money than the old The Workers' Herald.⁽¹⁾

1. G.T. Nolutshungu, Financial Secretary, I.C.U. to President and Members, National Council, I.C.U. 3rd January, 1929 (B/UCT); W.G. Ballinger: undated memorandum (B/Wits); W.G. Ballinger to W. Citrine 8th May, 1929 (B/UCT); W. Holtby: Kadalie's resignation, undated (B/UCT); W.G. Ballinger to Members of I.C.U. 7th August, 1929; New Africa 14th September, 1929; W.G. Ballinger to W. Holtby 1st October, 1929.

The Independent I.C.U. launched its African Native land Settlement Corporation Ltd. with a nominal capital of £100,000 offered in £1 shares. "£1", ran the New Africa advertisement, "makes you a full member of the I.C.U., pays your contribution to the Land Settlement Fund and gives you the right to purchase land on terms. Buy it". The land was to be sold in lots of three to six acres.⁽¹⁾ In August, 1929, Kadalie claimed that his organisation had spent £1,000 on land purchases.⁽²⁾ It is improbable, however, that the scheme ever evoked much response. The I.I.C.U.'s newspaper appears to have petered out towards the end of 1929, presumably because its revenue, whatever its provenance, ceased. Kadalie withdrew to East London, which was to be his stamping ground for the rest of his life.

Before leaving the Rand Kadalie participated in two events that involved Ballinger too. One occurred in August, when the two of them publicly debated their differences outside the Workers' Hall under the chairmanship of Eddie Roux. Needless to say few new arguments emerged on either side. Although he added to his stock the charge that, if Kadalie had left the I.C.U. to escape domination by a white man, he had done so only to fall into the clutches of another, Philip Morris, Ballinger concentrated mainly upon financial shortcomings. The question of the rifled safe was again brought up and the extravagance of the European tour. The assertion of the Communists, that their members were expelled from the Union because they wanted proper financial

1. New Africa 29th June, 1929; M. Hunter: Reaction to Conquest: Effects of Contact with Europeans on the Pondo of South Africa (London) 1936, p.568.

2. New Africa 14th September, 1929.

controls, was made, as well as an allegation that Kadalie was as guilty as Champion for the financial drain in Durban. In his reply Kadalie, while he could justly claim that the Communists had been ejected "through pressure from Mrs. Palmer and Mrs. Ethelreda Lewis" because the Party had "attempted to take the whole administration of the I.C.U. into its hands", and, with less justice, disclaim all responsibility for the financial side of the organisation, since he had rarely been in direct charge of the money affairs of the I.C.U. from the very beginning, he could not, nor did he attempt to, explain away the strictures the Communists La Guma and Glass had uttered in their day upon the financial laxity of senior officials, and when he came to deal with the European tour expenses, he relied more upon vituperation than explanation,⁽¹⁾ making much of his encounters with British racial prejudice and dealing with small items of expenditure without being able to escape from the fact that during seven months he had spent several hundred

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1. "At that time Ballinger went about telling people that he would crush Kadalie. Why did he not do so then, and why does he not do so now! The answer is: Because he has not got the gumption of a guinea pig, and because he hardly knows the difference between the credit and debit sides of an account or balance sheet ... He thought he had walked right into a little kingdom of stupid darkies, of which he was Lord and King. He was puffed up with this Kingly spirit when he usurped the powers of the National Council by endeavouring to compel me - his superior officer - to hand him over my accounts for audit ... I am not surprised, because from my few months contact with him I discovered that he works like a snail and reasons like a simpleton! ... I think ... that I wrote, and went through more correspondence during my seven months in Europe than you have, ever since you first learned to scrawl with a pen. You can't even write properly now, and your sense of figures and business acumen are a disgrace to those who off-loaded you on us ..." (New Africa 14th September, 1929).

pounds. Once again he brought out the well-worn accusation that he had been the victim of a Joint Council conspiracy: " ... shortly after Ballinger arrived here the Rev. Ray Phillips and Mr. Reinault (sic) Jones, political pope and high priest of the Joint Council, respectively, advised Ballinger to get rid of Kadalie". The evidence he produced was an undated letter, clearly from the pen of Mrs. Lewis, chiding him for disparaging the Joint Council and suggesting that that was no way to gain the confidence of those best able to help him. The key passage - "Many people have said to me that the organisation is needed but that Kadalie must go and the whole movement must be reconstructed; and these have been mostly people not wholly friendly to the movement. Their dislike to (sic) you may be part and parcel to the dislike to the movement itself." - has nothing whatever to do with Ballinger, nor does it contain, come to that, any hint of a Joint Council plot. There were, however, no bounds to Kadalie's credulity, or malice:

"I don't denounce you because you are a white man. My main objection to you is that you are a traitor of the black workers, you cannot speak the truth, you have split up and sold the workers to the capitalist. Yes, he is like Judas Iscariot, but Judas was a little better because he had at least the courage to do away with himself without being asked by anyone to do so. But this poor fellow here won't hang himself, in the physical sense of the word, he will die a swift but natural death like Mr. Ananias."

The debate was reported in New Africa,⁽¹⁾ and Ballinger's comment was: "Re latest issue of 'New Africa' Debate Report 'Ballinger v Kadalie' is 'cooked', served up by Morris (solicitor) as a last effort to force me out."⁽²⁾ The Independent I.C.U. claimed a great victory:

1. 14th September, 1929.

2. W.G. Ballinger to W. Holtby 1st October, 1929.

"If Ballinger specially came out to smash up the I.C.U. his temporary success was as speedy as it was afterwards a complete failure. From both appearances and facts one can safely say that before Kadalie had given half of his reply, Ballinger wished he was in any place (including hell) except outside the Workers' Hall. While Ballinger feverishly strove to manufacture a case against Kadalie his woeful showing was still further marred by his stupid interpreter, Bennet Gwabini, who, in his eagerness to keep Ballinger from drowning himself, interpreted things which Ballinger never said, thus affording Kadalie with rows of pegs on which to hang Ballinger until he was stone dead.

"But Gwabini's wrong interpretation was useless because Ballinger hanged himself before Kadalie even spoke." (1)

The New Africa report was unsubtle as propaganda. For, even if Kadalie's invective went down as well as the report says (and this is doubtful), the fact remains that the Ballinger indictment, though some of its facts were open to question, came through little impaired and the Kadalie defence, though it scored some points, could have done little to dispel the suspicion that he was unduly dependent upon the support of Morris and that he was unable to give a convincing explanation for his European expense account. There was scant comfort here for any intelligent and thinking member of the I.C.U., however, little inclined he might be to throw in his lot with the Ballinger group.

The second incident took place in November, when both Ballinger and Kadalie addressed a mass meeting in Johannesburg to protest against the Riotous Assemblies (Amendment) Bill. The demonstration was organised by the Federation of Non-European Trade Unions, and another Communist front body, the League of African Rights, also participated, and at first sight it seems strange that the I.C.U. of Africa (as it was now called, to distinguish it from the

1. New Africa 14th September, 1929.

Independent I.C.U.) joined in at all, as such methods were in conflict with Ballinger's policy of moderation and non-intervention in politics. However, the old I.C.U., having been invited, could scarcely afford to stand aside and leave the Independent I.C.U., which fully intended to take part, as the sole voice of a once-powerful movement. The presence, moreover, of the A.N.C. helped to give the meeting the character of a non-political protest representing all shades of opinion. As it turned out, it was dominated by the Communists, who brought to the meeting place an effigy of the Minister of Justice, Oswald Pirow, carried from their headquarters by a straggling procession. Eddie Roux was chosen as chairman, but shortly afterwards handed over control of the meeting to Clements Kadalie, who, according to Ballinger, was "not quite sober" and in a ranting mood. After the I.C.U. Adviser, who had driven to the rendez-vous with the Rev. Ray Phillips, had, on Kadalie's invitation to address the crowd, done so with studied moderation (amongst other things reminding his listeners that "black people were often exploited more by their leaders than by the white man", a deliberate allusion to the old I.C.U. leadership), the proceedings became livelier and reached a climax with the burning of the effigy. An incensed Government demanded an explanation from Ballinger, who readily provided one and also obligingly passed on what information (or gossip) he had about the state of the Communist Party, evidently succeeding in allaying official suspicion.⁽¹⁾

1. W.G. Ballinger: Joint Meeting I.C.U. of Africa; African Congress; Non-European Federation of Trade Unions; Communist Party; League of African Rights; Independent I.C.U. Sunday 10th November, 1929 (B/Wits and B/UCT).

Effigy burning was not Ballinger's way of doing things, and he was at pains to dissociate as far as possible the I.C.U. of Africa from the violence that the old leaders had sometimes^{threatened} (though never practised). For a time he even wondered whether it might not be best to start a brand new organisation with a new name, but was persuaded that the old name had a magic that justified its retention, and this view was upheld by Citrine.⁽¹⁾ Apart from the name there were few assets at his disposal in his task of revitalising the organisation. The only real hope lay in pulling off a coup, but a respectable one. The most hopeful avenue open to him was to complete the sectionalisation of the Union, get it registered and negotiate on behalf of the various sections with the Wage Board. In fact, this proved to be a disappointment, but hope in it - and with some cause - persisted for a long time. In the immediate post-Kadalie days Ballinger was not altogether despondent.

"The future is clouded but I am confident that a good sound movement will emerge from the chaos ... My experiences are surely unique. The work of putting our Black comrades on the right road had to be undertaken. I believe that my contribution is laying a good foundation. If my luck holds I shall see the day when the African peoples will demand their rightful share of the wealth of their country." 2)

The 1929 conference was held at Kroonstad in June as arranged. Ballinger referred to it as "the most fateful in the history of the I.C.U.",⁽³⁾ an understandable misjudgment, but a misjudgment nonetheless, since, as Roux put it, "the veld fire had burnt itself out."

1. W.G. Ballinger to W. Citrine 8th May, 1929; W. Citrine to W.G. Ballinger 4th June, 1929.

2. W.G. Ballinger to W. Citrine 8th May, 1929 (B/UCT).

3. W.G. Ballinger to N. Leys 19th June, 1929 (B/Wits).

It was useless to blow on the ashes."⁽¹⁾ If there ever had been an I.C.U. Conference more fateful than any other, it had been the Durban Conference of April, 1927, which had endorsed the policy of moderation and a search for external support; or the Bloemfontein Conference of April, 1928, which had failed to devise any practical measures of assistance for the peasants.

Wage Board applications were made in a number of towns, but the most hopeful appeared to be that at Kroonstad, submitted in August, 1929. An I.C.U. request for a minimum wage of £7.10s. a month for all African and Coloured workers in industry and commerce which was supported with written and oral evidence by Kroonstad Joint Council, seemed to have a fair chance of success after the Bloemfontein award of 1929. There followed a long delay. By the beginning of 1930 it became clear that no determination was to be made: Colonel Creswell, who had succeeded Boydell as Minister of Labour, was not going to use the Wage Board for providing a minimum wage for blacks, but only as an instrument for safeguarding white employment. The Bloemfontein award was an aberration.⁽²⁾

1. E. Roux: Time Longer than Rope, p.188.

2. W.G. Ballinger to W. Holtby, undated (B/UCT); W.G. Ballinger: Incitement or procrastination - which? Undated MS (B/UCT), which contains the following curious passage: "But Kroonstad ... proves that the Members of the House of Assembly subconsciously procrastinate, when the alleviation of native disabilities is under review, on the assumption that the Native has an inexhaustible fount of patience. If it were otherwise, one of the members would ere this have 'put a question' relative to the Kroonstad Wage Board Enquiry. But a Quota Bill, restricting the entry of Eastern European Jews into South Africa, is more important than the welfare of the native peoples. Supporting Zionism and a home in Palestine for the descendants of the 'outcast tribes', which few of the South African sons and daughters of Israel want to see far less to live in - is more likely to gain applause for the Politician, either seeking to consolidate his seat, or win the fickle electorate, than championing the cause of the unenfranchised African Native Industrial Workers."

In spite of the disappointments Ballinger was encouraged to carry on by the loyalty he commanded from the remaining officials, who had little to gain by way of material reward. It is indeed true, as Roux suggests, that the most flamboyant and lively official left with Kadalie, or had already gone before - Champion, Tyamzashe, 'Mote, Mbeki, Dunn, Elias, La Guma, Gomas, Khaile, De Norman, W. Smith, Maduna; and Gumbs, never more than a figurehead, died in 1929. Yet some able men stayed on with Ballinger, some who had been in the movement for years, particularly A.M. Jabavu (Senior Vice-President) and T.B. Lujiza (General Secretary); and the disappearance of Kadalie made possible the belated return of H. Selby Msimang as a "national propagandist". In March, 1930, they issued a Manifesto, pledging their continued support and paying tribute to the Adviser's selflessness and dedication. Such encomia were no less than his due. For he had been tireless in his efforts to promote the interests of the union, though living on a meagre and precarious salary.⁽¹⁾ Yet for all this, Ballinger enjoyed little support in the country. There was a marked drop in I.C.U. income from branches in February, 1929, the month of Kadalie's departure, and thereafter payments dwindled to the point that they could not

1. Manifesto of the I.C.U. of Africa (I.C.U.) to the Native People
31st March, 1930 (B/Wits).

balance administrative costs.⁽¹⁾ A modest fifty pounds from the Buxton Trust in August, 1929, was an occasion for rejoicing.⁽²⁾ By September, 1929, the total liquid assets of the I.C.U. stood at just over ten pounds.⁽³⁾ In March, 1930, a gift of £25 from Dr. F.O. Stohr financed a tour of the Free State and Transvaal; "to resuscitate our Union, which is on the verge of collapsing owing to lack of funds".⁽⁴⁾ It could have had little success. Old I.C.U. members were disenchanted with Kadalie, but equally were unwilling to give support to the I.C.U. of Africa.⁽⁵⁾ "It is true", wrote

1. Income from branches -

November, 1928	£175.13.3
December, 1928	£140.4.5.
January, 1929	£134.2.8
February, 1929	£ 99.19.2
March, 1929	£ 83.17.0
April, 1929	£ 82.18.0

In 1927 the figure had been in the neighbourhood of £1,000 a month.

Total income during those months was as follows:-

November, 1928	£294.14.9
December, 1928	£289.14.4
January, 1929	£181. 9.2
February, 1929	£234.19.8
March, 1929	£187.11.0
April, 1929	£168.13.9

(Statement of Income and Expenditure sent to the President and National Councillors, Kroonstad 21st June, 1929, (B/Wits)).

2. H. Pim to E. Lewis 14th August, 1929 (B/Wits).
3. H. Pim to W.G. Ballinger 20th September, 1929 (B/Wits).
4. B. Gwabini, A. Phoofolo and others to F.O. Stohr 26th March, 1930 (B/Wits).
5. The membership situation at Kroonstad is described by Henderson Binda, one of the last active Ballinger officials: "The old roll was 10,813 joined during time (sic) of Kadalie and 'Mote, from 1927 to 1928. Under the new system the number joined is 503, but very bad payers, if I collect two pounds it is a big sum." (H. Binda to H. Pim 18th September, 1929, B/Wits).

Lujiza towards the end of 1930, "people have now learnt their secession leader (sic), but they are not ripe for anything yet."⁽¹⁾ The very virtues of the I.C.U. of Africa were a liability. Patient endeavour, honesty and integrity, together with modest success in achieving limited aims, were unexciting and not the way to gain widespread and enthusiastic support. Faith had to be aroused by convincing promises, however unrealistic and extravagant; and this is how the I.C.U. enjoyed its ... moment of wealth and glory in 1927. How is it, asks the 1930 Manifesto, "that we hear of a bucket of half-crowns collected amongst Natives for the pocket of Dr. Wellington and yet for the I.C.U. officials and their adviser who makes no promises but get things done there are no buckets, even of pennies to support them?" It was the promises that mattered.

When in March, 1931, Miss C.N. Stohr made money available for another tour by I.C.U. propagandists, the men who went out could report only a lack of response. Ballinger himself became interested in the Protectorates and their importance as sources of labour for South Africa. Study tours which he made were sponsored by the newly founded Institute of Race Relations and the University of the Witwatersrand.⁽²⁾ Another interest he developed was the establishment of a consumers' co-operative on the Reef, which had a promising start, only to turn in the end into a conventional trading company. For a long time he was seriously ill. In 1934 the Secretary of the

1. T.B. Lujiza to E. Lewis 28th November, 1930 (B/Wits).

2. W. Holtby: Memorandum on Suggested Offer by the Buxton Trust of £400 for African Affairs (B/Wits). Charles Roden Buxton proposed using some or all of a grant from the Noel Buxton Trust for the payment of Ballinger's I.C.U. salary, which was paid mostly out of contributions from Britain.

Friends of Africa was founded by sympathisers in Britain and South Africa to make use of his talents and experience. Its aims and objects were "(a) ... to secure the abolition of all discrimination based solely on race and colour ... through lawful and appropriate action in the political, economic and social fields; (b) to extend and safeguard the application of the principles of civil and political liberty in relation to all races of Southern Africa; and (c) to assist in strengthening organisations of the African, Coloured and Asiatic races of Southern Africa through the medium of advice, encouragement and other methods of assistance." It interested itself in pay and working conditions of Africans in industry, African land and agriculture, African education, the remuneration of Africans in the teaching and other professions, and pressed for the recognition of African trade unions and the abolition of the pass laws, the industrial colour bar and the poll tax; and it devoted itself to gathering information and attempting to influence public and official opinion.

By then the I.C.U. of Africa was to all intents and purposes defunct. Ballinger himself put the date of its demise at 1936.⁽¹⁾

1. W.G. Ballinger: Society of Friends of Africa - Memorandum to Industrial Laws Legislation Commission 15th February, 1949 (B/UCT). The Society was heavily dependent upon voluntary contributions in Britain and lived from hand to mouth. (Cf. A. Creech Jones to M. Ballinger 27th June, 1938, B/Wits).

CHAPTER IX

All the King's Horses

"I plead with you to look and see how, who eradicated the I.C.U. to such irrecoverable inefficiency and recklessness? Is it not the lulling sweet mouths of white friends, the political chameleons? ... Where are the Batty's, Ballingers, Glasses and a host of other sweet crookes (sic), who stood on their hind-legs, bums and chins, insidiously showering, towering the I.C.U.?"

(S.J. Sitebe, 1930)

When Durban seceded from the I.C.U. at the end of May, 1928, most of the Natal branches seem to have thrown in their lot with the I.C.U. yase Natal,⁽¹⁾ as did some of the better known leaders, such as Maduna (for a short time) and William Smith, the latter absconding with Ballinger I.C.U. money.⁽²⁾ To many the Natal I.C.U. seemed to have a better chance of survival than did the parent body. However, the fortunes of the Champion I.C.U., too, were soon at a low ebb. As early as December 1928, a sub-committee of the Governing Body of the I.C.U. yase Natal was forced into a policy of retrenchment in Durban. Emissaries were to be dispatched "to revive the work and inspect outside Branches", while in Durban all the employees of the branch were to be dismissed "owing to the Financial position of the Branch, which continues to decline". Champion proposed to act as branch secretary himself, as well as continue as General Secretary of the Union.⁽³⁾ This gave rise to one of those bitter squabbles that are endemic in small and ineffectual organisations. The resolutions of the Governing Body's sub-committee were rejected⁽⁴⁾ and there was a struggle for possession of the Union's premises in Durban.⁽⁵⁾ Later events indicate

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1. The northern Natal branches, after conferring at Ladysmith in July, 1928, decided to join the Champion section. (The Natal Advertiser 9th July, 1928). Weenen was the only Natal branch sending money to the parent body between November, 1928, and April, 1929. (Statement of Income and Expenditure 21st July, 1929, B/Wits).
 2. The Natal Advertiser 9th July, 1928. Batty remained faithful to Champion until his death in 1930.
 3. A.W.G. Champion to Branch Secretary, Durban 4th December, 1928 (F 1928/62a).
 4. Branch Secretary, Durban to A.W.G. Champion 12th December, 1928 (F 1928/62c).
 5. Branch Secretary, Durban to A.W.G. Champion 14th December, 1929 (F 1928/62e).

Williams, Talbot - 116

Witwatersrand - See Johannesburg

Witwatersrand Native Labour Association - 303

The Workers' Herald - 196, 205, 232, 273f, 309, 323, 479, 524, 551

Workers' Hall - 251, 282ff, 327f, 356, 454f, 467, 552, 555, 611n.

Workers' Union - 95

Workmen's Compensation - 349

See also Miners' Phthisis Acts Consolidation Act

Zulus and Zululand - 129, 306n., 364, 373f, 414, 459, 492f, 574, 577n., 602

that there was a compromise providing for shared premises, but separate organisation, which means that Champion did not get his own way.

It seems all too likely that the Natal leader in 1929 was casting around for a suitable grievance to exploit in the interests of reviving the I.C.U.'s following in Durban. Such a grievance came to hand in April of that year, when in one of the suburbs of the city, Sydenham, the Local Administration and Health Board acquired the right under the 1923 Natives Urban Areas Act of manufacturing its own African beer ("Kafir beer") and the exclusive right of sale within the area under its control. This arrangement was long familiar in Durban itself, which had first assumed the sole manufacture and sale, in municipal "beer halls", of African beer under the Native Beer Act of 1908 and for many years exercised its monopoly, which was confirmed by the Act of 1923, without protest from the Africans who came to live in the city.⁽¹⁾ Champion, who apparently at that time did not drink himself,⁽²⁾ addressed a protest to the Native Commissioner at Durban.

"Our Union does not favour the manufacture and sale of kaffir beer by Health Boards or Municipalities. They protest strongly against any attempt to obtain money from poor natives by selling to them intoxicating liquor brewed by the local Governments, and they feel that such means of obtaining money from the natives is not a proper and honest way of maintaining the Western civilisation in this land. This is the matter which ought to be discussed not only with the natives such as those that are at Sydenham, but with the natives who are leaders in the country; on that line we wish to voice our strong protest against this attempt." (3)

Commission of Enquiry - Native Riots at Durban, 29th July, 1929
(Forman Collection), p.7.

Ibid, p.7.

Ibid, p.8.

Ibid.

protest in similar terms was addressed to the Secretary of the Sydenham Health Board.

"We protest against any local Health Board making attempts to obtain monies from the low-paid natives for the purpose of financing their funds for their own advancement, at the expense of the voiceless members of our Community who have suffered untold pains at the hands of certain people who are out to make them a football. We object to have our growing people to be taught by Europeans to drink kaffir beer. We feel that this is the step destined to deteriorate our race if all the surrounding suburbs of Durban will have their kaffir beer halls to obtain money from the natives who will not resist such inner temptation." (1)

Trisome as the municipal monopoly no doubt was, the allegation that the system was designed to debauch Africans for the financial benefit of the municipal authorities was somewhat far-fetched. Under the 1923 Act revenue from municipal beer halls had to be spent upon location amenities and it was, besides, at least arguable that the arrangement did diminish drunkenness. (2)

On successive Sundays in May (5th, 12th, 19th and 26th) a column of Africans, armed with sticks and headed by brass bands, marched from the I.C.U. Hall in Durban to Sydenham to hold protest meetings. On the 19th two European motorists were assaulted and on the 26th some of the marchers wore red tunics. (3) Then, towards the end of May, the disturbances spread to the barracks at the Point in Durban, where the Acting Compound Manager forbade the making (though this was not in fact against the law) and storing of "umqhu", a non-intoxicating beverage made from maize. One of the residents at the barracks, who objected, was deprived of his toilet - and therefore of his right to reside at the barracks and seek employment as a day labourer - on the ground that he had

advocated, in retaliation, a boycott of the municipal beer hall at the Point. When the man applied for renewal of his badge on 12th June and was refused, the I.C.U. took up his case and at the same time came out in support of a boycott, which was introduced partially the following day, strictly the day after that, and enforced by pickets.⁽¹⁾ On Friday 14th June a crowd one thousand strong attacked the Point beer hall under the impression that an induna from the railway works had flouted the boycott. Champion, who was accompanied by Batty, appeared on the scene and quietened the rioters down. Although on this occasion considerable damage was done, there were to be no further assaults on property by the blacks.⁽²⁾

On Saturday 15th June five thousand leaflets were distributed by the I.C.U. threatening those who did not observe the boycott and attacking the municipal authorities in Durban. African beer, it was alleged, had "enriched the Corporation", which had used the proceeds to build "barracks where natives are badly treated". "Native spendthrifts", "tempted with kaffir beer", had no money left to go home, which meant "many supportless people at the kraals".⁽³⁾ Next day, Sunday, a gathering of 5,000 on Cartwright's Flats was addressed by Champion, J.T. Gumede of the African National Congress and another man, named and/Mapumulo. Champion's speech was an attack upon the Durban Corporation, black police constables and the Government. "All those present were warned to join the I.C.U. as members, failing which they would be dealt with by a society called the Unite League!"⁽⁴⁾ Gumede, who had accompanied La Guma to Russia in 1927 after the Brussels anti-colonial conference, spoke with greater restraint.

¹ Ibid, p.9-10.

² Ibid, p.10-11.

³ Ibid, p.11.

⁴ Ibid, p.12½

"I am against Imperialism because it took our land. I told you I disagreed with political parties in South Africa, because they have agreed among themselves to oppress the black man. The Communist party is a new party in South Africa, and we still want to find out about them. If we find that they are all right, we will follow them, but we must open our eyes and think." (1)

On Monday 17th June, events reached a climax. In the early afternoon a deputation headed by J.H. London of the I.C.U. made known to the Corporation's Native Affairs Department the grievances of the Durban Africans, the most important being the case of Meijelwa, the man who had lost his togt badge, and, of somewhat less importance, the Sydenham beer monopoly and Durban's lack of a proper location with a location advisory board.⁽²⁾ Meanwhile a group of I.C.U. men, armed with sticks, was making the rounds of the beer halls and enforcing the boycott. When the Borough Police, armed with pick handles, attempted to arrest them for contravening the bye-laws relating to carrying sticks, they resisted and there were casualties to both groups.⁽³⁾ Champion, evidently alarmed at the turn of events, although he himself was in large measure responsible for what was happening, was persuaded by Captain Baston of the South African Police to use his influence in the interests of peace. After inducing a crowd at the Point barracks to disperse, he agreed to call off the pickets on the understanding, given by Captain Alexander of the Borough Police, that grievances would be brought before the proper authorities; he was then accorded an interview by two members of the Borough Council. The police authorities were satisfied that the disturbances were at an end.⁽⁴⁾

Ibid, p.12.

Ibid, p.13.

Ibid, p.13.

Ibid, p.13.

They were not. As in Port Elizabeth in October, 1920, and in Bloemfontein in April, 1925, there ensued the intervention of a white mob that the police would not or could not control. During the afternoon of the 17th Europeans who had seen or heard of the clash between the police and the I.C.U. patrol earlier in the day began to gather outside the I.C.U. Hall in Prince Edward Street, and their numbers were greatly swollen in the late afternoon as the first edition of the evening paper appeared on the streets. By five o'clock there were, at the very least, five hundred people besieging the Hall.

"The mob was armed with sticks, and even with firearms. There were minor conflicts between individual natives and members of the crowd ... The crowd had also become incensed by the rumour, quite unfounded, that there were two white men inside the Hall consulting with and advising the natives. Stones were thrown into the I.C.U. Hall windows. Bottles and stones were thrown back by the beleaguered natives, who hastily barricaded the windows from the inside, and who also telephoned to Captain Baston for assistance.

"Before the arrival of the Police, there was an armed sortie from the Hall causing the mob to scatter in confusion. Just then a motor car drove up in the direction of the Hall, the occupants being the driver, George Hotchin, McCabe and Martin. They alighted out of curiosity and were then attacked by the natives in their rush from the Hall. Martin escaped, McCabe was killed, and Hotchin left for dead...

"During this sortie from the Hall another European, Jamieson, walked up to the I.C.U. Hall to see what was afoot. Like Hotchin he too was very severely knocked about, and left for dead. Another European, Cummings, was also attacked at that time by a native who dashed out of an adjoining Indian store. He subsequently died from his injuries.

"Some of the natives who made the sortie escaped, others made their way back into the Hall. After a time the European mob moved back to the Hall ...

"The mob was now utterly unrestrained and bent on revenge, shouting out 'Blood for blood'. According to the opinion of the Police Officers they would undoubtedly have killed every native in the Hall, had they been able to effect an entrance ..." (1)

While the disturbance was going on, Champion arrived, only to leave at once when he saw how things stood. (2)

1. Ibid, p.14-15.

2. Ibid, p.15.

The crowd, urged by the Mayor and the Chief Magistrate to disperse, but without effect, was forced back by a combined force of Borough Police, armed with batons and pick handles, and South African Police, armed with batons.

"Meanwhile a large force of armed natives, estimated at about 2,000 were hurrying from the Point to the assistance of their fellows besieged in the I.C.U. Hall ... As the natives came marching or running over the railway bridge ... Chief Constable Alexander swung his men round so as to face them ... His men, some 90 in number with 170 Native Constables in support were then facing North. At the same time the civilian mob rushed up from behind, and either lined up with the Police or else stood immediately behind them. When the natives were some 20 paces away there was a stab of flame from their left wing, which the Chief Constable said he took for the discharge of a firearm. The civilian crowd then commenced to fire into the natives, checking their onrush. (1) They wavered, broke and fled, being pursued and attacked by the civilians in motor cars and on foot, most of the casualties, according to Police opinion, taking place during the flight and pursuit. The Police forces, both Borough and South African Police, remained in position awaiting further eventualities. There was, however, no further attack, nor did the civilian mob return in force.

"Meanwhile under cover of darkness, the Borough Police were able to evacuate the natives in the I.C.U. Hall and to rush them to places of safety. Altogether between 40 and 50 men, 28 women and 2 children were so evacuated.

"The Police kept guard until 2 a.m. on the 18th when, all being quiet, they were withdrawn. Up to that time the damage done to the I.C.U. building was from £30 to £60 (estimated).

"The next morning, however, the civilian mob returned to the scene, effected an entrance into the Hall and caused damage to moveable contents to an amount of £500. The Hall is on the second floor of the building, and from there a piano was thrown down into the yard, all the furniture in the Hall wrecked and a safe conveyed and handed over intact to the Police.

"There was no disturbance of any kind after that." (2)

The total known casualties were ninety-one. Three people were killed (one white, two black), four died of wounds (one white, three black) and eighty-four wounded (13 Europeans, 65 Africans, of whom 14 had gunshot wounds, 3 Indians and 3 Coloured). (3)

1. Some of the Borough Police were unofficially armed with pistols, which they certainly fired. (Ibid, p.17).

2. Ibid, p.15-16.

3. Ibid, p.16.

A Commission of Enquiry was appointed on 28th June, 1929, with a single commissioner, Mr. Justice de Waal, who took evidence over a period of eight days at the beginning of July. Sixty-one witnesses were heard and they included the Mayor and Chief Magistrate of Durban, W.G. Ballinger, A.F. Batty, Rev. J.L. Dube, A.W.G. Champion and J.T. Gumede. The I.C.U. was represented by Cecil Cowley.⁽¹⁾

In his report de Waal was unsparing in his condemnation of the behaviour of the white mob.

"According to all the evidence one thing emerges clearly, that there would have been no disturbance during the afternoon and evening of the 17th, and that there would have been no damage then done to life or property, had the civilian mob not gathered at, and attacked the Hall ...

"From the police evidence, it is quite clear that not only was the civilian mob not asked to come to the assistance of the Police, but that they were directly responsible for the events of the afternoon and evening. According to that evidence the Police, Borough reinforced by South African Police, were fully competent to cope with any emergency that might have arisen. In Captain Alexander's opinion, however, the assistance afforded by the civilians at the actual moment of attack by the armed native force was welcome; and he doubts whether at that time his force would have been able to withstand the shock of the native attack. Captain Baston, whose men were never in action ... thought otherwise. In his opinion the combined police forces (he had 26 Europeans and 32 natives under him) were fully able to cope with the position, and that even at the time of the actual attack by the natives, the civilians were more of a nuisance and a hindrance than a source of help.

"I do not overlook the fact that when a sortie was made from the Hall, McCabe was cruelly butchered to death, and Jamieson terribly ill-treated and tortured. But the white mob was likewise guilty of gross excesses. The native who was with the relieving column, and was seen to carry and use a firearm (I assume he did, although the evidence is not conclusive on that point) was subsequently overtaken and done to death in inhumane manner. And after the relieving column was in full flight, it was pursued and attacked by the white mob, many of them in motor cars." (2)

1. Ibid, p.1.

2. Ibid, p.16-17, 21.

The police were commended for their restraint⁽¹⁾ and absolved from any charge of negligence in their failure to disperse the crowd of whites and protect the I.C.U. Hall from being ransacked.⁽²⁾

Champion came in for some severe criticism. The Commissioner, though not denying the existence of well-founded cause for complaint, regarded the I.C.U. leader as a trouble-maker who exploited grievances "of a trifling nature".⁽³⁾

"All the grievances ... were fully gone into during the cross examination of Champion, and it was almost pathetic to see how utterly devoid of any substance they became during that cross examination." ⁽⁴⁾

His speech on Cartwright's Flats on Sunday 16th June was particularly adversely commented upon: "nothing could have been more unfortunate or better calculated to lead to further trouble."⁽⁵⁾

To the mind of Mr. Justice de Waal his references during that speech to communists and communism revealed his sympathy towards them, and this sympathy was further betrayed by his acquiescence in the use of the I.C.U. Hall for speeches by "notorious communists, such as Bunting, Walton, Petterson" and in the sale of The South African Worker at I.C.U. meetings.⁽⁶⁾

"Communist agitation, although not directly being a cause of the riot, certainly contributed to the general unrest."⁽⁷⁾

1. Ibid, p.17.

2. Ibid, p.19.

3. Ibid, p.18.

4. Ibid, p.13.

5. Ibid, p.12.

6. Ibid, p.18.

7. Ibid, p.18.

De Waal concluded his report with a number of recommendations.

1. A continuation of the existing arrangement for the brewing and sale of African beer.

"To revert to the old system would be to revive all the evils attendant thereon, and to lead to an almost immediate increase in drunkenness and crime. Kaffir beer is not only a national beverage but has large food values as well. As brewed by the Borough it is clean and wholesome and contains the minimum percentage of alcohol. The grievance that some natives indulge in it to excess, and to the prejudice of their dependants at their kraals is of course regrettable. But in this respect the Native is not singular. And one undoubted benefit he derives from the present system is that by law the net revenue accruing from the sale of kaffir beer is spent in various ways upon the Native himself and for his benefit. As an alternative other natives have urged the right to brew their own beer under proper supervision. How supervision is to be exercised over 38,000 brewers, the advocates of the alternative system have been unable to explain. Were the Native allowed to brew his own beer the makers of skokiaan and shimiya and kekeviki would come into his own with all the deplorable and well-known consequences." (1)

2. The establishment of a proper location.

"The Borough has done much in erecting high class barracks and eating houses, and huts for married workers. But it should do more. The huts, some 120 in number, are well constructed but are totally insufficient for the needs of all the better class natives who wish to have their families with them. What is essential is for the Borough to lay out a residential native township where a native who wishes to do so may reside with his family; where he could keep a cow, run his fowls and till a small piece of land ... More places of recreation should also be provided. The native is fond of sport and vigorous. Full of animal spirits, he has few places to go to on a Saturday afternoon and Sunday to relieve him of his excess of vitality. It is far better for himself and for others that he should spend his spare time on playing fields than that he should brood over imaginary grievances and be exploited by agitators at home in his barracks." (2)

3. The setting up of an Advisory Board.

"It is harmful in any society that a man with a grievance, whether it be real or imaginary, should not have an official or a body before whom he can lay his grievances. Under present conditions the individual takes his grievance to Champion who in turn comes into contact with the Borough officials. But Champion has no official status except that he represents the members of the I.C.U. who in turn represent

1. Ibid, p.20.

2. Ibid, p.20.

only a small proportion of the natives resident in the Borough. Moreover Champion has in various ways made co-operation between himself and the Borough Officials difficult, if not impossible. Where therefore Champion has proved himself impossible and has failed as a go-between, the appointment of an Advisory Board is recommended, and will, I believe, succeed." (1)

4. The restoration of his toggt badge to Mcijelwa "as an act of grace". (2)

5. Clemency "in generous measure" to convicted Africans. (3)

Durban continued to smoulder after the July riots. Consequently the new Minister of Justice, Oswald Pirow, determined to teach the Zulus a lesson, led a punitive tax-gathering expedition to the city that achieved considerable effect by a test use of tear gas grenades. (4) Then at the end of the year the Government secured an amendment to the Riotous Assemblies Act which gave the Minister of Justice power to banish any person, black or white, from any part of the country. Champion, though anxious to make his peace with the Government, was one of the first victims, being ordered in September, 1930, to leave Natal. He spent the next three years, while his ban was in force, mostly in Johannesburg, (5) where he worked for a bank. (6)

While Champion was taking all the limelight in Durban Kadalie was still hoping to repair his damaged fortunes. Invitations were issued to a conference at East London, called the Second Annual

1. Ibid, p.20-21.

2. Ibid, p.21.

3. Ibid, p.21.

4. E. Roux: Time Longer than Rope, p.192.

5. Ibid, p.192-193.

6. The Colonial Banking and Trust Company (A.W.G. Champion to the Chairman and Members of the Committee of Inquiry into the Conditions of Natives in Urban Areas, n.d., F/MSS/40).

Conference of the Independent I.C.U., the second annual conference within ten months, as Ballinger, who declined an invitation to attend, sarcastically observed.⁽¹⁾ In the Orange Free State Mote and Elias received invitations, but did not attend, Elias because his car broke down,⁽²⁾ Mote probably because he had no money. It may safely be presumed that the delegates to the Conference came from the few Independent I.C.U. branches in the Eastern Province, the only two known ones being Port Elizabeth⁽³⁾ and King William's Town. In the absence of outside delegations the Conference was preoccupied with parochial issues, above all the grievances of the East London employees of the Railways and Harbours Administration. The delegates decided to approach the Administration with a demand for a minimum wage of 6s.6d. a day, which, if granted, would have been a marked advance upon the prevailing rate of 3s.6d. It was agreed to call a strike on 16th January if the demand were not met, and this decision was endorsed by a mass meeting in one of the locations. An ultimatum was passed to the Administration, together with a request for the appointment (under Act 25 of 1925) of a commission of investigation into the dispute.⁽⁴⁾ The East London System Manager denied the applicability of the 1925 Act⁽⁵⁾ and made no offer to negotiate. He no doubt thought he was in a strong position, because there was plenty of surplus labour in the town, white and black, and, as it happened, little work available in the harbour,

1. H.H. Smith: Op.cit., p.167. The first conference was the Bloemfontein one of April, 1928.

2. Ibid, p.166.

3. Ibid, p.176.

4. Ibid, p.162.

5. Ibid, p.164.

which was unusually empty.⁽¹⁾ Officials of the Administration tried to forestall the strike by threats of dismissal or loss of privileges.⁽²⁾

Since the Union had not amassed any funds to sustain a strike, Kadalie sent telegrams impartially to the League Against Imperialism in Berlin and the International Transport Workers' Federation in Amsterdam asking for money. He also telegraphed the South African Trades Union Congress, the Cape Federation of Labour Unions and the National Union of Railway and Harbour Servants soliciting help in preventing "scabbing" by white workers. Two members of the Legislative Assembly, Madeley and Krige, were asked to take up the cause of the African railway employees in Parliament.⁽³⁾ In the meantime preparations went ahead for a strike. A committee was formed that included Kadalie and his brother Robert, Tyamzashe and Maduna and a belated attempt was made to build up a strike fund from local contributions.⁽⁴⁾ Strike rules were issued, imposing a code of discipline - no alcohol and no carrying of sticks or other weapons.⁽⁵⁾

When the strike began on Thursday 16th January only three hundred men stopped work, but it affected the stevedores of the Union Castle Company as well as the labourers of the Railways and

1. Ibid, p.168.

2. Ibid, p.163-164.

3. Ibid, p.164-165.

4. Ibid, p.164-165.

5. Ibid, p.165. Kadalie (My Life and the I.C.U., p.183-184) adds that the strikers were "instructed to gather in the location and take exercise in sports and games."

Harbours. As was to be expected, there were allegations of intimidation.⁽¹⁾ A daily routine was established of prayers, hymns and abusive and hortatory speeches,⁽²⁾ replete with vague promises of external assistance. Although there were no threats of violence, the authorities enrolled special constables and sent police patrols into the location.⁽³⁾ The stoppage never became complete. Not only was white casual labour taken on, but there was also little solidarity among the African tribal groups. The Union Castle Company brought in labour from Durban, while the Basuto workers, who had their own organisation, the Basuto Workers' Association, carried on working.⁽⁴⁾

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1. ^R H.H. Smith: Op.cit., p.167-168, 174-175, 179, 185. Kadalie's account seems to indicate that there was some intimidation. (My Life, p.184).
 2. For example: "The police have been sent here by Pirow and Hertzog to frighten you. The police are bloodthirsty buggers ... Hertzog and his goddam Government must realise that they are dealing with a new Native race with me as their leader. We will not fight them with sticks. Our way of fighting on this occasion is going to be to remain at home and let them do their own dirty work ... I am positive that the Satan in Hell has more wisdom than Hertzog. Can't he see that if we get higher wages we will be better able to pay our taxes. I know he takes the native tax money to educate his son in Holland ..." (H.H. Smith: Op.cit., p.173).
 3. Ibid, p.172.
 4. Ibid, p.168, 170, 174. Kadalie's account (My Life, p.184) does not square with the facts: "For a week the railways and harbours' (sic) strike was a complete success. Ships were lying idle in the harbour, but the authorities did not sit idle either. They brought in Zulu labourers from Durban who were kept in complete ignorance when they embarked that they were to scab on their fellow African workers at East London. When the Zulus found that the harbour was deserted, they became suspicious and refused to work. The result was that they were transported back to Durban." The Zulus were brought in solely to work the mailboat and were then taken back.

On Monday 20th January an attempt made to extend the strike to the town had some success at first, but after a few days it became difficult to keep the town workers away from their jobs. No assistance came from far-off and it is clear that the I.C.U. had only very limited means of feeding the strikers.⁽¹⁾ The International Transport Workers' Federation sent an evasive reply by telegraph and all Kadalie got was a message of solidarity from the African National Congress in Johannesburg.⁽²⁾ Although the small hard core of strikers among the dockworkers (rather fewer than five hundred men) remained resolute,⁽³⁾ in the harbour, which had filled since the beginning of the strike, all the ships were being worked within the week. On the evening of the Friday Kadalie and Maduna announced that on the following Monday the I.I.C.U. would put out pickets to make the strike more effective. "To-day", said Maduna, "we have arrived at our decision. By the blood of their fathers shall the children get their freedom."⁽⁴⁾ Consequently on Saturday afternoon the Chief Magistrate, addressing a meeting in the location, warned the crowd that picketing was unlawful and that the police would take action to prevent it.⁽⁵⁾ On Sunday the entire strike committee, by means of a trick that Kadalie thought extremely dishonest, was arrested. Complying with a polite request to go to the police

1. H.H. Smith; Op.cit., p.175; M. Hunter: Op.cit. p.569.

2. H.H. Smith: Op.cit., p.171.

3. Ibid, p.178, 180, 186.

4. Ibid, p.180. According to Kadalie offers of mediation by Dr. Rubusana and the Rev. Alfred Petros of the Anglican Church were rejected by the Railways and Harbours Administration. (C. Kadalie: My Life, p.185).

5. H.H. Smith: Op.cit., p.181.

station, the members of the committee fell into a trap. Kadalie and a single companion, who had gone ahead of the others, were seized first.

"The district commandant began to speak to us politely at first, presumably so that we should not suspect a sinister action on his part. He then uttered these words: 'You see, Kadalie, a strike is sometimes a bad thing. Someone would injure your child who might attend a strike meeting in curiosity.' Thereupon he pulled out the drawer of his desk, took out a large-sized revolver, levelled it at my forehead and shouted, 'Hands up, you are now my prisoners.' Thereafter his face was transformed into frenzied fury, while the armed police rushed into his office and placed their handcuffs on all (sic) of us, most savagely, as if we had attempted to resist arrest ...

"This was my darkest hour, but I strove to behave like an African warrior ... On my left hand there is still a mark which reminds me all the time of the brutal act of the South African Police ..." (1)

As the other members of the committee arrived, they too were handcuffed, and all were flung on to the back of a lorry for removal to gaol. (2)

It appears that the location residents heard the news without much sign of emotion. The special constables were disbanded, though regular police remained in the location. (3)

When they appeared in court next day, the I.I.C.U. leaders were remanded in custody on a charge of incitement to public violence. After his remand Kadalie, allowed or induced to address the people

1. C. Kadalie: My Life and the I.C.U., p.187-188.

2. Ibid, p.188.

3. ^RH.H. Smith: Opacit., p.183. There is some conflict here with the account given by Kadalie (My Life, p.189-190), who says that there was some indignation among the I.I.C.U. followers, who vented their anger upon the Wesleyan Church, attempting to burn it down simply because its minister had written a letter to the East London newspaper condemning the strike.

who had gathered outside the courthouse, told them that the strike was over, following this up with a letter of confirmation to the Executive Committee of the Union.⁽¹⁾ Although Kadalie's instruction that the strikers must return to work was repudiated by two members of the Executive Committee who had not been on the strike committee⁽²⁾ and therefore had not been arrested, the strike did not continue much longer.⁽³⁾ On 10th February the arrested men appeared before the resident magistrate, who accepted Kadalie's application for bail but fixed it at an impossibly high figure - £200 for Kadalie and Maduna and £100 each of the others.⁽⁴⁾ They were committed on 26th February for trial on eleven counts of incitement to public violence, or, alternatively, on a charge of rousing a "feeling of hostility between Natives and Europeans."⁽⁵⁾

1. ^RH.H. Smith: Op.cit., p.183-184.

2. Ibid, p.184.

3. Ibid, p.185. There appears to have been some trouble over arrests for pass offences. (C. Kadalie: My Life, p.184).

4. ^RH.H. Smith: Op.cit., p.187. The "Crown was not prepared to grant any bail to the prisoners ... During that week-end I prepared my notes in gaol as a basis for my application for bail on the following Monday ... When Monday came, the court was again crowded to the point of suffocation ... I began my address slowly, in a clear voice, and said I was surprised that in a court of British justice bail be refused to prisoners who had not been arraigned with very serious charges such as murder or high treason. In support of my application I quoted cases in the manner a barrister would do ... As I went on I got 'warmed up' on the course (sic) of quoting other legal authorities, to the astonishment of the crowded court. Briefly, I managed to capture the sympathy of the bench by my unexpected address." (C. Kadalie: My Life, p.190-191). Kadalie says that the police would not accept bonds on the houses of I.I.C.U. members as securities. (Ibid, p.193).

5. Section 29 of the Native Administration Act (^RH.H. Smith: Op.cit. p.187). Kadalie has "116 charges". (My Life, p.198). His account of the entire court proceedings, from his first appearance in court on 27th January to his commitment for trial on 26th February, is chronologically difficult to unravel and is intrinsically implausible. He puts his appeal to the crowd to end the strike as late as 26th February, when he was committed to trial, instead of 27th January, when he was remanded in custody.

At Grahamstown, whither the accused were taken, a more reasonable bail was obtained on the application of Advocate W. Stuart, whose wife paid Kadalie's. Kadalie and Tyamzashe made their way home to Johannesburg, where they awaited the opening of the trial on 1st May.⁽¹⁾ Though acquitted on the alternative charge, Kadalie was found guilty of incitement and fined £25, which was paid immediately. The others were acquitted.⁽²⁾ Having been released the I.I.C.U. leaders returned to East London in triumph; at least according to Kadalie.

"After our five months' absence we found the members and the residents of East London coming to the meeting in their thousands. As I climbed on the wagon platform there was such vociferous cheering as was, perhaps, never heard before at East London ... I was now the great hero of East London among our people." ⁽³⁾

In fact, the Independent I.C.U. lost prestige⁽⁴⁾ and the strike can only be reckoned a failure. Though perhaps for a day or two the general strike was as much as 86 per cent. effective⁽⁵⁾ and great determination was displayed by part of the Railways and Harbours' labour force,⁽⁶⁾ the stoppage was short-lived and partial.

1. C. Kadalie: My Life and the I.C.U., p.195.

2. R.H. Smith: Op.cit., p.187-188. By his own account the trial redounded much to Kadalie's credit. "Both our counsel and attorney complimented me during the usual interview on this smart legal achievement", i.e. discrediting a police witness. Again: "Here I scored heavily in my reply ..." Again: "... my counsel and attorney were apparently pleased with my replies." (My Life, p.196-197). Kadalie was found guilty for uttering the words: "If the scabs go to work on Monday, we shall give them a damned good lesson by sjamboking them." (Ibid, p.198). This was his speech of Friday 24th January which announced the intention of picketing. (R.H. Smith: Op.cit., p.180, 188).

3. C. Kadalie: My Life and the I.C.U., p.199.

4. M. Hunter: Op.cit., p.570.

5. R.H. Smith: Op.cit., p.185.

6. For an entire week the number of regular and casual workers on strike remained constant. (Ibid, p.186).

and there was never any indication that the employers were prepared to compromise. One firm increased its daily wage from 3s. to 3s.6d. South African Railways rewarded with a bonus the men who had remained at work and punished with loss of seniority and, in some cases, dismissal those who had joined in the strike. Undoubtedly the strike was ill-conceived and hastily executed without preparation. The impression is created that Kadalie, desperately anxious to recover his standing, was consciously or unconsciously influenced by a desire to repeat the success that the Cape Town dock strike of ten years earlier had had in establishing his position. The East London strike showed how ineffective are strikes - however spectacular - that are not backed by organisation, planning and experience and are confronted by an adamant refusal to admit the need for generosity combined with an implacable determination to concede nothing. The public authorities in East London acted with a coolness and skill that must have owed something to the lessons of Port Elizabeth in October, 1920, Bloemfontein in April, 1925, and Durban in the preceding June. Their conduct might also, without injustice, be judged unscrupulous.

Since for Kadalie East London was no doubt a backwater, he went back as soon as possible with Tyamzashe and Maduna to Johannesburg, where, however, he was not permitted to remain long. After holding a meeting in Pretoria he was served with an order from the Minister of Justice, prohibiting his attending or addressing public meetings on the Rand and Pretoria.⁽¹⁾ Thus muzzled there

1. C. Kadalie: My Life and the I.C.U., p.201.

was little point in his remaining in Johannesburg and therefore he made his way back to East London, where he was based for the rest of his life.⁽¹⁾ The City Council viewed his choice of residence with extreme distaste, but, although after a long and costly legal battle it succeeded in ousting him from the East Bank Location, he was, as a parliamentary voter, able to resist eviction from the city itself, where he bought a house in 1936.⁽²⁾ His last significant action before taking up residence in the Cape was to use his influence in Bloemfontein against a pass law defiance campaign organised by the Communist Party, which was supposed to culminate in public pass burning on Dingaan's Day, 16th December, 1930.⁽³⁾ Henceforth Kadalie had only local importance. Although he participated in the Non-European Conferences, these were ineffective and Kadalie himself never regained a national following. The authorities kept a close watch upon his movements and subjected him to a degree of harassment. In 1931 he was foiled in an attempt to visit the Transkei, where the Independent I.C.U. had, or claimed to have, two branches, and in 1932 he was arrested for failing to pay his poll-tax.⁽⁴⁾

In the 1930's there were sporadic attempts at reunification of the several I.C.U.'s. In 1931 the initiative came from Keable

1. Ibid, p.202-203.

2. Ibid, p.204-206.

3. Ibid, p.202; E. Roux: Time Longer than Rope, p.196, 246-247. Roux seemed to believe that there was substance in the rumour that Kadalie had come to an understanding with the authorities. This is unlikely. Kadalie may have wanted to get his own back.

4. C. Kadalie: My Life, p.203-204, 215.

'Mote, then Acting General Secretary of the Federated Free State Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union in Kroonstad, who tried to get Champion to participate in a reunification conference.⁽¹⁾ Champion, no doubt unwilling to attract official attention and so protract his "exile", made excuses. It was he that poured cold water upon a more determined effort in 1933,⁽²⁾ when Kadalie was the moving spirit. A reunification conference held at Bloemfontein in June of that year accepted reunification in principle and decided to take steps to reconcile the constitutional differences amongst the three surviving sections, the Ballinger I.C.U., the Natal I.C.U. and the Independent I.C.U.,⁽³⁾ and to hold a further conference later in the year to ratify an agreed constitution for a united I.C.U. The list of absentees from Bloemfontein was longer and filled with more distinguished names than the list of those who attended. Kadalie, of course, was there, as were Tyamzashe of the Independent I.C.U., John Mancoe of the I.C.U. of Africa and James Ngcobo of the I.C.U. yase Natal, but no one else of note, apart from J.T. Gumede of the A.N.C., who acted as chairman.⁽⁴⁾ The poverty of the three I.C.U.s is revealed by the difficulty Kadalie experienced in extracting £1 for expenses from the Natal and Ballinger I.C.U.s.⁽⁵⁾ Not only were they poor, but they were also subject to schisms. The ill-feeling between the I.C.U. yase Natal

1. Keable 'Mote to A.W.G. Champion 25th March, 1931 (F 1931/11).

2. A.W.G. Champion to J.J. Magade 7th December, 1933 (F 1933/23).

3. Nothing is heard of 'Mote.

4. I.C.U. Reunion Conference: Unanimous agreement to unification (sic) (F 1933/16a); The Star 17th July, 1933.

5. C. Kadalie to A.W.G. Champion 1st November, 1933 (F 1933/17).

and the Durban branch (eventually the only branch) that had broken out as early as December, 1928, recurred.⁽¹⁾ The very reunification movement caused another split in Durban in 1933.⁽²⁾ Kadalie, too, had his troubles and was not master in his own house.⁽³⁾ There was some further negotiation in 1936 for reunion and Kadalie had hopes of regaining his position of influence.⁽⁴⁾ He - now called the General Secretary of the United I.C.U., the name given to the supposedly reunited body of 1933 - and Champion appeared together at a meeting in Durban. "Workers of Durban", urged the public notice, "come and hear the two leaders speaking from one platform. Roll up in your thousands."⁽⁵⁾ It is unlikely that they did.

The failure of the black trade union movement in the 1920's gave African aspirations once again a political direction. Just as in Britain in the 19th century the working class, after the disappointment of the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union, placed their hopes in the Chartist movement, so in South Africa the black population, disillusioned by the I.C.U., turned to the All-African Convention and the A.N.C. There was, however, a striking difference between the two situations. For, whereas in Britain the proletarian struggle was for improvement, in South Africa the black struggle was to prevent a further worsening of African economic and political conditions.

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1. In 1931 the Acting Branch Secretary and the Acting General Secretary were quarrelling about who should pay the electricity bill. (D.L. Bopela to J.J. Macebo 13th March, 1931, F 1931/8). There were other trivial disputes. (Cf. D.L. Bopela to J.J. Macebo 22nd April, 1931, F 1931/17).
 2. C. Kadalie to A.W.G. Champion 25th July, 1933 (F 1933/8).
 3. J.J. Magade to A.W.G. Champion 1st November, 1933 (F 1933/12).
 4. C. Kadalie: My Life, p.213-214.
 5. F 1936/1.

In this post-I.C.U. situation Champion was more successful than Kadalie in accommodating himself to the change. Kadalie, who had never been a Congress man, remained to his dying day associated only with the I.C.U., a relic of the past. Champion, on the other hand, entered upon a political career which brought him quite as much prominence as his work with the I.C.U. had done.

The All-African Convention was a protest movement in response to the reintroduction in 1935 of the Hertzog "Native Bills". The meeting, held in Bloemfontein in December, 1935, was attended by Kadalie and Champion. Professor D.D.T. Jabavu led a deputation to Cape Town to make known to Government and Parliament the views of the Convention, but the delegates were less single-minded than the Conference had been and either accepted or were thought to have accepted a complicated compromise, which passed the House of Assembly by a large majority.⁽¹⁾ In compensation for removal from the common electoral roll black voters were allowed to elect three members - white - to the House of Assembly and four Senate seats were set aside for white representatives of Africans throughout the entire Union, the four to be indirectly elected by chiefs, headmen, district councils and location advisory boards. A Native Representative Council composed of a black elected majority and a white nominated minority was set up to advise the Government on matters of interest to the African people. The question now was whether the blacks were to co-operate with the Government in putting the new arrangements into operation; and to discuss this a second

1. Jabavu denied having accepted the compromise, but Kadalie was unconvinced. (Ibid, p.208-209).

meeting of the All-African Convention was held in July, 1936, also attended by Kadalie and Champion. Before leaving East London Kadalie canvassed the opinions of four white politicians, F.S. Malan, C.W. Coulter, Advocate C.J. Gardner and Advocate Will Stuart, whose advice, however - they all apparently (F.S. Malan and C.W. Coulter certainly) advised co-operation - was rejected. At the Convention Kadalie submitted a motion calling for non-co-operation that was never put to the vote. A majority of the delegates decided in favour of co-operation.⁽¹⁾

Although in 1936 Kadalie had advocated a boycott of the new electoral arrangements established by Parliament, he made use of the services of the members of the Legislative Assembly elected to represent the interests of Africans in the Eastern Province, Mrs. Margaret Ballinger.⁽²⁾ In fact, he became respectable, securing election to the Location Advisory Board and, by his own account, being accepted by the authorities as the voice of the black railway and harbour workers.⁽³⁾ During the war he even sought election to the Native Representative Council, but, after he had started his election campaign, it turned out that he was ineligible to stand because he had been born outside the Union of South Africa.⁽⁴⁾

Appeals to authority achieved nothing then or in 1946, when he was hoping to stand for the 1947 election. A long letter at the beginning of 1947 to Smuts was his last, unsuccessful attempt. In his

1. Ibid, p.209-211.

2. Mrs. Ballinger took up the case of railway and harbour workers in East London excluded from the provisions of the 1928 Gratuity Act because of their participation in the 1930 strike, and she induced the Railways and Harbours Administration to reverse its decision. (Ibid, p.214).

3. Ibid, p.214-215.

4. Ibid, p.215.

autobiography Kadalie suggests possible reasons for the determination of the Government to keep him out of the Council.

The "Government, being aware of my debating powers, as well as the influence I still possess among my fellow Africans, does not desire me to become a member of the N.R.C. Added to this, the Minister of Native Affairs will not so easily forgive me for my audacity at the first National Anti-Pass Conference held in Johannesburg in 1944, when I moved a motion of 'no confidence' in him as our Minister. On top of this I added another deadly bombshell when I sent a cable to the Secretary-General of the United Nations in New York on October, 23, 1946, which read: 'The Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of Africa, parent body of African trade unionism, strongly objects to the incorporation of South-West Africa into the Union of South Africa because our Government, headed by Field-Marshal Smuts, is the architect of colour bar discrimination. We favour a United Nations mandate over South-West Africa.'" (1)

Champion was more successful. He did become a member of the Native Representative Council in 1942. Like Kadalie he became a leading light of the Local Advisory Board. His appetite for litigation and business enterprise remained and it is apparent that he found opportunities to indulge it.⁽²⁾

One more strike must be mentioned, again at Buffalo Harbour, East London, in May and June, 1946. Although it seems unlikely that Kadalie had much to do with it, the authorities suspected him. Their suspicions were based upon the flimsy evidence preferred by the Railways and Harbours' Administration's Inspector of Non-European Labour.

1. Ibid, p.216-217.

2. A.W.G. Champion to Chairman and Members of the Committee of Inquiry into Conditions of Natives in Urban Areas, n.d. (F/MSS/40). His association with Cowley continued.

"... It has been reliably learnt that 50 of the ex-casuals, including the five leaders, were agents of Kadalie, whom he meets in secret and they are guided by him in making representations. The rest of the casuals are ignorant of the activities of these 50 and believe that their representatives are acting on their behalf. The names of this group cannot at present be determined. I desire to emphasise, however, that I am not in a position to submit concrete evidence in support of the information conveyed above.

"Furthermore, during an interview with 50 long term casuals employed in the Graving Dock ... a spokesman stated that they were not prepared to work in the harbour area, being afraid of the strikers. Before dispersing, one of the workers flashed his I.C.U. membership card in my face, stating he would go to Clements Kadalie. It was obvious that all were members of the I.C.U. and refused duty in sympathy with the strikers. This confirms still further the suspicions that the leaders of the intermittent casuals are the agents of Clements Kadalie." (1)

The evidence seems to be just as strong that Kadalie tried to take the conduct of the strike over but was rebuffed.⁽²⁾ The same Inspector of Non-European Labour suggested one source of Kadalie's continued influence: "It is not by the strength of the I.C.U. ... that Kadalie exercises his power over the Natives for the total membership in East London to-day is only 638, to which must be added a small branch in King William's Town probably not counting more than 100 members. He has, however, built up a system of agents who contact Natives arriving from the Reserves and arrange lodging and employment, where possible. For these services the 'raw native' is duly made to pay and he is kept under the influence of Kadalie."⁽³⁾

Kadalie, who had once led a nation-wide union, spent his declining days preoccupied with the affairs of the East Bank Location, renamed Duncan Village, ruling his tiny kingdom like a

1. Quoted R.H. Smith: Op.cit., p.194.

2. Ibid, p.194, 200.

3. Ibid, p.142.

mighty empire, a Napoleon on St. Helena. He lived "in the 'North End' - in a most unprepossessing suburb of East London populated by a mixture of races - in a reasonable dwelling house for that area, but one which is most beautifully furnished."⁽¹⁾ The latter-day triumphs of the I.C.U. were "a growing membership running into four figures" and the capture of "all six seats on the Location Advisory Board." "We revolutionised the proceedings of the Board, inasmuch as we made it possible for the residents of the locations to attend its meetings ... During our time of service on the Board we made some history. When the City Council decided in 1946 to demolish houses in the East Bank Location ... on my initiative a public meeting was held where a petition was read out by me and unanimously adopted for transmission by telegraph to the Ministers of Native Affairs and Public Health ... A memorandum prepared by me was subsequently forwarded to the ministers concerned, who in turn sent a commission of inquiry ... I was complimented afterwards ... for my memorandum ... The I.C.U. was honoured by the Natives Law Commission of Inquiry which invited it to submit evidence when the Commission held its sittings at East London in October, 1946. My old colleague Henry Daniel Tyamzashe and I gave evidence which was duly published in the press ... Only recently another comprehensive memorandum was presented to a Government commission which is inquiring into the affairs of the East London locations. Notwithstanding the fact that the I.C.U. is not functioning in many parts of Africa ... at East London the work of the Union goes on smoothly every day, rendering yeoman service to its members."⁽²⁾

1. Ibid, p.142.

2. C. Kadalie: My Life, p.217-219

In October, 1951, Clements Kadalie, accompanied by his wife, Eva, paid a visit to his homeland. Shortly afterwards he died of diabetes, diagnosed too late for treatment.⁽¹⁾

University of Cape Town

1. African Drum June, 1952, p.32-33.

CHAPTER X

Conclusion

"Natives can be taxed as in the case of Europeans without having to be subjected to the indignity of having to produce, under compulsion and a pain of imprisonment, on demand by any policeman, any receipt of payments made or papers of identification." (Resolution of the Bloemfontein Conference, July, 1920)

"Our union would humbly request the commission to consider the methods usually employed by the South African police, who round up Africans in our locations in the early hours daily. In East London one finds that a state of martial law exists; for raids are carried out by the police early in the mornings for passes and poll-tax receipts." (Memorandum of the I.C.U., East London, to the Natives Law Commission of Inquiry, October, 1946).

In the magistrate's court in Johannesburg the Administrative Secretary was able to offer a list of only 819 names and, when pressed, said, "I can produce about a thousand or two more names if you give me time; but I shall want about two weeks, because some of the handwriting is indecipherable."⁽¹⁾ Since central records were so inchoate, it seems unlikely that the branches, where there was less administrative competence than at headquarters, kept more complete or more reliable records.

The most reliable statistics come from Durban,⁽²⁾ but even these must be treated with some scepticism, not because they deliberately misled, rather because they were imperfectly kept and never revised. While the nominal membership at the end of 1927 stood at 45,487, there is little evidence to show how accurately this figure reflected real or "financial" membership.⁽³⁾ How many of those forty-five thousand odd people who joined the I.C.U. Durban branch remained loyal paying members? Perhaps a more reliable guide to membership is the income from subscriptions. This reached its highest point in May, 1927⁽⁴⁾ and it would not be unreasonable to take the nominal membership at that date as the

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1. Unidentified newspaper cutting (B/UCT).
 2. Investigation and Report; the Natal Provincial and Durban Offices of the I.C.U. 4th April, 1928, Annexure F (F 1928/24).
 3. Members forfeited privileges of membership if they were ten shillings and six pence behind in their contributions, according to the 1925 Constitution (Section 5), or six weeks behind, according to the 1927 Constitution (Rule 11).
 4. There was an extraordinary drop in subscriptions in March, 1927, according to the Main Cash Book of the Durban offices, but this falling off must have been apparent rather than real, the result of administrative or clerical aberration. The Main Cash Book "does not record cash receipts in chronological order. Furthermore ... nor are vouchers for revenue available in such a form as to satisfy us that all revenues collected have been accounted for." (Investigation and Report ... Annexure A).

greatest effective membership attained. This was 27,590. Up until then £2,505.8s.9d. had been collected in enrolment fees. At two shillings a head this would give 25,054 members, only about 2,500 fewer than the nominal enrolment, a difference that would easily be explained by the fact that many members of the Durban branch were women or men living outside the city and would have paid only one shilling entrance fees.

Giving evidence to the De Waal Commission on the Durban riots in July, 1929, Detective-Sergeant Arnold of the C.I.D. stated that up to May, 1928, 88,000 Natal Africans had joined the I.C.U.⁽¹⁾ He did not say where he got his information from,⁽²⁾ but certainly he was not exaggerating the strength of the Union in an attempt to prejudice opinion against it, since he went on to say that the current membership was only 2,342. The fact, however, that 88,000 people joined the I.C.U. in Natal at some time or other before May, 1928, is no more evidence that there were ever that number of members in the province at one time than the fact that the nominal membership of Durban branch in December, 1927, was 45,487 is proof that there were actually as many I.C.U. members as that in Durban at the same time. It is necessary to scale down Arnold's figure to try and assess what the real Natal membership was at the time of the Union's greatest strength. Perhaps it would not be unreasonable to take the Durban figures as a guide to the degree of reduction necessary. Two difficulties then arise: firstly, the peak outside

1. Natal Mercury 19th July, 1929.

2. Possibly from Champion, who was a "great friend and ally" of Arnold (W.G. Ballinger to A. Creech Jones 23rd January, 1929, B/UCT).

Durban was probably reached later than it was in Durban - after July, 1927, when the first evictions of farm workers took place, rather than May of that year; secondly, the last known figure for Durban membership is that for December, 1927. With regard to the second point, however, it is not likely that the nominal membership of May, 1928 (Arnold's date), was much higher than that of December, 1927, since by the end of the year the point had been reached when few new names were being added to the list. As for the first point, real membership in Durban could not have been enormously different in July, the presumed zenith of the extra-Durban membership, from what it was in May, 1927, if subscription totals are a reliable guide, though it is true that there was a marked decline in enrolments in July. Let, therefore, the 45,487 nominal Durban members of December, 1927, be reduced to the 27,590 of May, 1927, as being a more likely real membership. Then, if the total Natal membership of 88,000 of May, 1928, were reduced correspondingly in the hope of arriving at a reasonable estimate, it would give a Natal real membership at ^{its} highest point of 52,800.

Such a membership would give 25,210 members to the twenty-three branches outside Durban, an average of 1,096 a branch. Although at first sight this may seem large, when one thinks of the small membership of at least some of the branches inspected by the General Secretary in March, 1926, it is not unreasonable. The total non-European population of the districts served by the Durban branch, viz Durban (101,599), Pinetown (41,947) and Inanda (67,861) was 211,434. A Durban membership of 27,590 meant that over 13 per cent. of the non-European population belonged to the I.C.U. If the same proportion held good elsewhere in the province, such vigorous branches as Port Shepstone, Estcourt and Vryheid must have had a

membership well in excess of the average. Indeed, Vryheid claimed a membership of 9,081.⁽¹⁾

It is no use trying to arrive at an estimate of I.C.U. membership from the total income to Head Office. In 1927 this was £11,695.2s.0d.⁽²⁾ and this represents only ten to fifteen thousand members, according to the estimated ratio of female and rural workers to male urban workers. The difficulty is that Head Office income represented only a fraction of the total revenue of the I.C.U. In spite of the strict procedures enjoined by the Constitution, failure of branches to centralise funds is attested by ⁽³⁾ ample evidence. Durban itself, in 1927, sent in only £1,684.17s.1 out of a total income from enrolment fees and subscriptions of £6,606.15s.11d.⁽⁴⁾ Durban was clearly not untypical.

"The work of your National Council and the I.C.U. generally is being seriously retarded through Branch Secretaries ⁽⁵⁾ omitting to send on, or bank, their members' contributions."

When Ballinger took up his appointment as Adviser, stricter financial controls were brought in. Head Office fulminations continued.

"On several occasions we have received disquieting reports re the incapacity of some branch officials. Where monies are found to be missing and explanations is (sic) unsatisfactory, offending persons will be required to refund monies, otherwise they will be prosecuted. The New System and Head Office checks will quickly find out defaulting Officials." ⁽⁶⁾

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1. Branch Secretary, Vryheid to W.G. Ballinger 21st August, 1928 (B/Wits). The secretary wanted £4.10s.0d. to pay the rent. "To-day a requisition for £4.10s.0d. was received from a place named Vrieheid (sic) and the Secretary boasting claims 9081 of a membership. At 2/- a month this gives an income of £908.2.0., per annum £10,897.4.0. Of course there is something wrong." W.G. Ballinger to A. Creech Jones 22nd August, 1928, B/Wits).
 2. Statement showing Branch Transfers (F 1927/107).
 3. Ibid.
 4. Investigation and Report ... Annexure F.
 5. Circular letter of President and General Secretary 26th July, 1928 (B/Wits).
 6. I.C.U. News Letter 19th October, 1928 (B/UCT). The new system was the stamp system.

Three months later:

"Branch secretaries repeatedly violate Rule 10 of the Constitution. This is due to general lack of discipline, confusing Headquarters circulars and verbal instructions." (1)

However, although Head Office income is itself no guide to total membership, it would not be unreasonable to hazard a guess at the membership of the other provinces on the basis of the estimated membership of Natal, by means of a comparison of their respective contributions to Head Office revenue with that of Natal. Presumably branch secretaries as a whole in each province were no more or less dishonest or inefficient than those in any other province. A calculation based on the Natal membership estimated at 52,800 and on the provincial contributions in 1927 would give the Cape Province (providing 3.6% of Head Office revenue from branches) 3,114 members (an average of 163 for its nineteen branches); the Orange Free State 9.1% of revenue) 7,811 members (average 355 for twenty-two branches) and the Transvaal (26.1%) 22,576 members (average 981 for twenty-three branches). In that case total I.C.U. membership would have been 86,301, a conservative estimate that hinges on a fairly drastic scaling down of Arnold's figure, and yet not so very far below the Union's own claim of 100,000 towards the end of 1927. (2)

A membership of just over three thousand in the Cape Province, with a branch average of a little more than a hundred and sixty.

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1. I.C.U. News Letter 18th January, 1929 (B/UCT);
 2. The claim of nearly 200,000 members in early 1928 need not be taken very seriously. No one knew better than Clements Kadalie that if the I.C.U. had no more than 100,000 members in November, 1927, it certainly did not have twice that number later.

seems to conform well enough to the estimate of six and a half thousand in mid-1925,⁽¹⁾ since when there had been scarcely uninterrupted decline. The estimate for the Orange Free State also seems valid when one bears in mind the weakness of the Bloemfontein branch, which could in no way compare with Durban or Johannesburg as an active and profitable centre.⁽²⁾ As in Natal, its branches were predominantly rural, but its rural population appreciably less dense. The only piece of evidence that causes some hesitation in assigning a relatively modest membership to this province is the claim of an enrolment of 10,813 at Kroonstad during 1927-1928.⁽³⁾ However, since the non-European population of the district was only 26,081 and since the claim originated with 'Mote, who had taken up his headquarters at Kroonstad in preference to Bloemfontein when he became Provincial Secretary, such a figure can safely be disregarded. A much more credible assessment of the strength of a rural branch comes from the Transvaal. The sober and dispassionate report on Volksrust and Wakkerstroom of December, 1928, puts the membership of these two branches at 1,000 and 2,000 respectively.⁽⁴⁾ Both branches were in the district of Wakkerstroom, which had a non-European population of 32,405, giving a 9 per cent. membership.

1. See page 204 above.

2. Bloemfontein branch was called "unfinancial" at the meeting of the National Council in November, 1927 (Minutes, p.13).

3. H. Binda to H. Pim 18th September, 1929 (B/Wits).

4. At least the report as published in the I.C.U. News Letter of 5th December, 1928, does. As published in The Workers' Herald of 31st December, 1928, the report has 1,000 and 200. The first is more likely to be correct. It is not without significance that the figures are clearly only estimates, illustrating the rudimentary character of branch records.

If such a membership was typical of the Transvaal, an estimated total membership for the province of 22,500 is perhaps too conservative. It should be borne in mind, moreover, that the I.C.U. in the Transvaal reached its strongest after the climax had been passed in Natal, so that a figure which is arrived at by a comparison between the Transvaal and Natal in mid-1927 does less than justice to the former. Yet, seeing that Natal was waning while the Transvaal was waxing, it is improbable that the estimate for the total I.C.U. membership at its greatest need be adjusted.

So far it has been assumed that it is possible to equate support for the I.C.U. with paid up membership. This, however, is unrealistic. Subscriptions were high in relation to wages and undoubtedly many members were constrained by poverty, not indifference, from paying their dues.⁽¹⁾ Therefore, there must have been a great deal of informal and spasmodic support. The informality of I.C.U. membership and the haphazard methods employed for registering and collecting subscriptions are revealed by the following account of a meeting he attended at Heilbron shortly after his arrival in South Africa, taken from an undated memoir of W.G. Ballinger:-

"After the meeting some of the officials and I got sections of the crowd together in small groups. We questioned them with regard to when they had joined the I.C.U., made their last contributions ... All without exception showed with considerable pride at least one card. Many produced two or three, while some had four, covering a period of about two years. A scrutiny revealed that few of these cards had a record of more than two contributions paid on them. Most had only one. A check disclosed that contributions paid corresponded to the date of mass meetings. Further questioning

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1. "Quite a number of the country members pay their subs in kind."
(W.G. Ballinger to A. Creech Jones 24th October, 1928, B/UCT).
 2. From internal evidence written about 1960 (B/Wits).

"revealed they had no idea that the monthly subscription was part of their contract with the organisation. They pointed out that collections were taken at all meetings to defray expenses and assist the organisation financially. Incidentally I have seen these collections taken in buckets and filled to overflowing (sic)." (1)

In conclusion, then, one may say that at its most influential the I.C.U. must have commanded the support of not fewer than the hundred thousand members it claimed. The maximum membership, however, was maintained for only a few months, Natal beginning its climb towards the end of 1926 and starting its descent in the middle of 1927 and the Orange Free State and the Transvaal reaching their peak towards the end of 1927. If one were to add together all those who at one time or another supported the movement, they would perhaps number as many as 150,000.⁽²⁾ The influence of the Union was felt throughout a very large part of the Union of South Africa and even beyond its borders. Outside South Africa branches were certainly formed in Southern Rhodesia,⁽³⁾ South-West Africa and Basutoland, while in South Africa itself, though in the Cape it moved little outside its early sphere of influence (only to Graaff-Reinet, Griqualand East and the Mafeking area), the I.C.U. covered with its branches most parts of the remaining provinces. How effective this influence was is quite a different question.

1. From internal evidence written about 1960 (B/Wits).

2. One arrives at a figure not far short of this if one takes Detective Sergeant Arnold's figure of 88,000 for Natal and calculates once more on the basis of contributions to Head Office in 1927. E. Roux: Time Longer than Rope puts the membership of the I.C.U. much higher. In 1926 it "had perhaps fifty thousand members. In 1927 the numbers were doubled; in 1928 they were doubled again. Almost a quarter of a million strong, the I.C.U. reached its zenith and then the crash came." A doubling of membership in 1928 is not supported by the evidence available.

3. T.O. Ranger: Aspects of Central African History (London, 1968), p.228-230. It is interesting to notice that in Southern Rhodesia, where there were branches at Salisbury and Bulawayo, the I.C.U. was more successful in attracting crowds than in collecting subscriptions. No doubt this was often true of South Africa too.

Was the I.C.U. a genuine trade union? The fact that it concerned itself with political questions would not in itself disqualify it. The I.C.U. may be - and has been - looked at from a variety of standpoints, as a phase in the history of trade unionism in South Africa, as an early demonstration of black nationalism, as an uprising of land hungry peasants trapped in a feudal relationship, and as a tribal revolt. All these standpoints are valid, except perhaps the last one. To an extent the Natal movement was a Zulu revolt, but the undoubtedly tribal basis of the I.C.U. in Natal was a source of weakness, not of strength. At its best and noblest the I.C.U. surmounted the barriers of tribe. This was the I.C.U. that saw Kadalie, the Atonga, welcomed by enthusiastic Zulus at Pietermaritzburg at the time of the challenge to his ban. The Natal members remembered that they were Zulus only when the movement was in decline and when the feeling spread that they had been ill-rewarded for their ungrudging support for the Union. In contrast, if the tribal note of the movement was muted, its note of feudal protest was strident. In 1927-1928 the movement was above all agrarian. Yet this fact, no more than its political propensities, invalidates the I.C.U.'s claim to be a true trade union. Its rural members may have been serfs, but their principal demand was for higher wages, not for commutation of labour services.

If a nationalist is one who seeks the freedom of his racial or linguistic group from subordination to an alien group, then Kadalie was a nationalist. He was not, however, preoccupied with purity of race nor dedicated to racial exclusivism. What Kadalie wanted was, not dominance, but acceptance into white society and unimpeded progress of Africans into full civil rights. Realising, like the

the Economic and Wage Commissioners of 1925, that the South African omelette could not be unscrambled, he sought an extension of the franchise and the opening of skilled employment to blacks, or, rather, protested against the whittling away of privileges and the closing of doors.

It would not be difficult to assemble evidence that would appear to show quite the contrary.

"The country is overrun with 'Bruin Mense'. Many of them are off-spring of decent and legitimate parentage. But many thousands of them are the bastard children of European and Native parents. The bastards have more rights and privileges than the children of decent legitimate, pure-bred African parents. Under General Hertzog's scheme all the 'Bruin Mense', legitimate or illegitimate, will have the (same) ... privileges as the white people. But there is a happy sequence (sic) to General Hertzog's scheme, in the form of a proposed Immorality Bill ... This law has just come in time ..." (1)

"Let the officials of the I.C.U. stand on their feet or organise our native people everywhere. Teach them, imbue them and baptise them with that fire which causes a man to agitate and fear no one for the benefit, welfare and salvation of his people. We shall never rest until this cause is carried right through South Africa, and if possible the whole extensive continent of Black Africa. Hence we shall be confirming and establishing Ho. Mr. Marcus Garvey's policy - AFRICA for the AFRICANS, Europe for the Europeans, Asia for the Asiatics and all other intruders according to their natural countries." (2)

"There is, of course, no doubt that the European in this country is doomed to political and economic extinction." (3)

Yet I.C.U. propagandists rarely spoke in unison and they betrayed a lamentable lack of consistency. On the whole the expression of

1. The Workers' Herald 15th January, 1926.

2. The Workers' Herald 15th August, 1925.

3. The Workers' Herald 20th February, 1926. It continues, " - but segregation and all these other wildcat schemes now in the air will only hasten the white man's doom, whereas co-operative brotherhood with the black man will give him a longer lease of life." It is arguable that Kadalie's fondness for Nicholls's Bayete indicates that his thoughts were tending to black domination.

intolerant and threatening opinions was untypical and an understandable response to the white oligarchy's commitment to a policy that was, if less relentless and less merciless in the more civilised days of the 1920's, nonetheless compounded of racial intransigence and political obduracy. It would have been surprising had the I.C.U. escaped the influence of a contemporary movement so powerful and exciting as the Universal Negro Improvement Society, but there is no evidence that any of the leading figures of the I.C.U., perhaps J.G. Gumbs,⁽¹⁾ was deeply influenced by Garvey.

White people were shocked by sentiments, now commonplace in the world, then unfamiliar. "Let the white people in general forget," wrote Clements Kadalie,

"once and for all the blasphemous lie that it is a law of God that some nations shall rule over others continuously ... The lie has never worked and never will. Those who believe it have always perished." (2)

There were complaints among whites that Africans were treating them with less respect than in the past and they scarcely realised that the old deference had nothing to do with race, but originated in a respect that Africans felt for what they acknowledged as a civilisation superior to their own. As Professor D.D.T. Jabavu explained to the Select Committee on the "Native Bills" in 1927,

"We instinctively take off our hats to the white man even where we know he is distinctly inferior to us in educational and economic attainments. In my own case, I unconsciously say 'boss' to the white man who mends my fences, just because of my natural respect for the white colour which has behind it a history of 2,000 years of development, a respect which in these exceptional cases I do not regard as being derogatory."⁽³⁾

1. C. Kadalie: My Life and the I.C.U., p.99.

2. The Workers' Herald 20th July, 1925.

3. Union of South Africa: The Select Committee on the Subject of Native Bills, p.282.

The situation was changing. The younger generation of African leaders felt itself sufficiently versed in the ways of European civilisation to demand equality of opportunity and reward - and sometimes puts its demand in an uncouth and gauche manner. More important, however, was that the supposed custodians of the civilisation that bestowed honour and respect were embarking upon a policy of racial tyranny which they dignified with such euphemisms as "civilised labour policy", thus degrading the civilisation they claimed to be defending. "Natives of the type of Mr. Kadalie," continued Professor Jabavu,

"are produced by the abnormal development of natives due to abnormally bad laws and conditions. The laws which have been instituted lately by the Government, and the conditions of hardship amongst native labourers have admittedly produced that class of abnormal native who has developed before his time. The Kadalies are simply the natural and inevitable result of the persecution of natives." (1)

The fact that the I.C.U. leaders were nationalists does not weaken the Union's claim to be a trade union, a claim constantly repeated and emphasised. In a number of emergent African states trade unions were in the van of the independence movement and no doubt Kadalie would, in a different period and in a different setting, for example in his native Nyasaland,⁽²⁾ have been in the forefront, but as a Sékou Touré, not as an Nkrumah.

The I.C.U. was a trade union. It did the sort of things that trade unions are supposed to do, pursuing the grievances of workers against their masters, presenting evidence to the Wage Board and to

1. Ibid, p.282.

2. Kadalie was on friendly, though not intimate, terms with Dr. Hastings Banda, whom he met in London in 1927.

employers, and sending deputations to ministers and parliamentary committees and government commissions to make known its views on industrial legislation and conditions. If it also did things that are not generally associated with trade unions, acting as a spokesman for a wide variety of grievances, such actions must be explained by the peculiar circumstances of South Africa with its strange mixture of modern industry, feudalism, tribalism and bureaucratic intervention. It may have been inefficient, badly-run and ephemeral. It may have dabbled excessively in politics. It was still a trade union.

Why did the I.C.U. fail? There was a view current among those who had dealings with it that, had Clements Kadalie acted in some different way, it would have been more effective and lasting. This view was expressed by W.G. Ballinger: "If Kadalie could have accepted guidance and advice, he would have changed the whole history of Native policy in South Africa."⁽¹⁾ The advice and guidance that Ballinger had in mind, of course, were his own. His enemies argued that what the I.C.U. suffered from was an excess of advice and guidance from that quarter, that, in fact, Ballinger killed the I.C.U. The obvious weakness of that argument is that the I.C.U. was already bankrupt and disintegrating when he took over as Adviser. Perhaps, if the circumstances of the Union had been different, he might have proved an admirable choice and enjoyed a fruitful collaboration with Clements Kadalie, as indeed for a short time he did. For he was eminently capable of introducing into the organisation that stiffening which its administration so clearly needed. Financial integrity is what he

1. W.G. Ballinger: The rise and fall of the I.C.U., undated MS (B/UCT).

valued above all else and he himself was transparently honest, dedicated, and unsparing of his time and energies. Yet it must be considered doubtful whether he and Kadalie could have maintained an unruffled relationship for long; whether the volatile and impetuous Kadalie could have endured for long the stern demands of financial accountability. What to Ballinger were guidance and advice were to Kadalie intolerable intrusion and insufferable patronage.

From the left came the criticism that the I.C.U. did not pursue a policy that was militant enough. Kadalie was "unwilling to carry out the mass resistance he had promised ... The masses sank back into sullen suspicion ... the opportunity he thus squandered was unique in the history of the black man's struggle for freedom in this country."⁽¹⁾ This romantic view cannot be supported. In spite of the very widespread membership of the Union at its greatest, it never disposed of effective power. Without influence in the labour force of the mining industry it could never have mounted a general strike. The capacity of the employers to lock out and dismiss was immensely greater than the ability of the I.C.U. members to strike. That the I.C.U. never called a strike and discouraged those that spontaneously occurred is the gravamen of the left-wing charge. What is all too clear is that the I.C.U. was incapable of running a strike. The dock strike of 1919, which was effective and impressive, was run and sustained by white trade unionists. Thereafter the I.C.U. leaders had neither the organisational ability nor, much more to the point, any funds.

1. E. Roux: Time Longer than Rope, p.197.

It failed to build up any reserves apart from a fixed deposit in the bank that was inviolate chiefly because it was not readily accessible. As for violent resistance to the regime, this was inconceivable. No government is compelled to make far-reaching changes in society or is overthrown unless it has forfeited the support of almost every section of society and has lost the will and capacity to govern. In South Africa all the power lay with a governing class armoured in self-confidence and self-righteousness.⁽¹⁾

It might be thought that the I.C.U. died from white hostility, suffocated by oppressive legislation. This, too, is a view difficult to argue. The obstacles to the development of black trade unionism were indeed formidable and in the 1920's the South African situation became increasingly inimical to them. Starting off in unfavourable conditions, the I.C.U. saw during its brief existence the passage of further inhibitory legislation - the Industrial Conciliation Act, the Mines and Works Amendment Act and the Native Administration Act. Nevertheless, the climate of the period was far more propitious than it was to become. The Government then was not the monolith that it was later. The South Africa of the 1920's may have been a country where a black trade union had difficulty in surviving. It was not a country where a black trade

1. Cf. C. Leubuscher: Der südafrikanische Eingeborene als Industriearbeiter und als Stadtbewohner (Jena, 1931), p.156-157. "Es ist anzunehmen, dass die verantwortungsbewussten Führer der Eingeborenen - Häuptlinge wie Intellektuelle - sich zu sehr der Aussichtslosigkeit eines Kampfes bewusst sind, den mit Axten, Stöcken und Wurfgeschossen bewaffnete Eingeborenen-Haufengegen eine Truppenmacht zu führen hätten, der alle Errungenschaften der modernen Kriegstechnik zu Gebote stehen, als dass sie die von ihnen Geführten in einen selbstmörderischen Kampf treiben würden."

union could not function because of the antagonism of the Government. If there was the Industrial Conciliation Act, there was also the Wage Act. Seen in retrospect the punitive legislation and bureaucratic controls seem incredibly mild. Very little restraint was placed upon the movements of the I.C.U. leaders and even the Native Administration Act could not bridle Kadalie's tongue.

Magistrates were often lenient and disposed to give the benefit of the doubt. The police were sometimes capable of showing sympathy and understanding. Most important of all, within the ranks of the ruling class, there was a faction that lent some support to the black proletariat in its struggle. The white labour movement, both in its industrial and in its political guise, may have been selfish and narrow-minded, but it was not completely deaf to the voice of conscience and the demands of class solidarity. The Wage Board was used on behalf of black workers; the white trade unionists did kill the Prevention of Disorders Bill and did modify the Native Administration Bill; Madeley did receive the I.C.U. deputation. Other support, albeit cautious, came from the civil servants. Clearly the trend in Department of Labour policy was in the direction of acceptance of Africans on equal terms in the white economy. Towards the end of 1928 the Secretary for Labour wrote in terms much less ambiguous than a year before.

"I believe that the Native has been told and come to believe that the White man regards him as a menace and fears him and that a policy of repression has been dictated by fear. The counter for an attitude of this kind - in regard to industrial matters with which alone my remarks are concerned - is by administrative methods to accept the Native - who de facto takes so large a share in our industries - as being there de jure and entitled to participate according to his standing and abilities in the protection and opportunities afforded by law to other workers.

"It is clear that such a policy has not been visualised in our industrial laws as desirable in the past. The Industrial Conciliation Act expressly provides otherwise. But

"I think that the assurance can be given that there is no member of this Staff, made up as it is of men and women brought into daily contact with the issues at stake, who would hold any other view than that suggested above." (1)

It is true that the future lay with the segregationists and that the fall of Madeley and Pirow's foray into Durban were symptoms of growing harshness in other official quarters. Whatever moderating influence the white labour movement could exercise was greatly reduced by the success of the National Party in 1929 in gaining an overall majority in the House of Assembly. Nevertheless, the argument that the I.C.U. would never have survived in the wintry climate that was being ushered in is irrelevant.

The conclusion is inescapable that the I.C.U. was not done to death, but died from its own fatal flaws.⁽²⁾ One wonders what sort of black general labour union could have survived. The austere I.C.U. of Ballinger failed as much as the spendthrift I.C.U. of Kadalie and the pettifogging I.C.U. of Champion. The militant and presumably incorruptible and democratic South African Federation of Non-European Trade Unions, run under the aegis of the Communist Party with J.A. La Guma as General Secretary, also did

1. Central Archives: Department of Labour 4002/1103/2 Secretary for Labour to Minister of Labour 15th November, 1928. The italics are original. The Secretary (C.W. Cousins) goes on to talk of "festina lente", not unexpectedly. He seemed to accept the possibility of following a policy in "industrial matters" that was different from the one the Government was pursuing politically.

2. This was the view of E. Roux. (Time Longer than Rope, p.196).

not last.⁽¹⁾ It is difficult to suppress the thought that black trade unionism is an anomaly in a multi-racial society. Would general unions in Britain ever have survived if unskilled labourers, owing to some distinguishing mark as irrelevant as skin pigmentation, had been ostracised by the rest of the labour movement and had, in turn, repudiated all contact with other unions?

It is all too simple to show the deficiencies of the I.C.U.'s administration and policy. Money was poured out as fast as it came in on costly litigation, unwise business ventures, needless use of cars, telephones, and telegrams, expensive premises,⁽²⁾

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1. "... The membership figures of the several Unions are those supplied by the Federation in connection with the annual collection of statistics for the Director of Census ... Their accuracy is doubted. An Inspector called upon the Federation but found no books from which to check the information ... It is reported that the Secretary of the Federation (J.A. La Guma) has even absconded." (Central Archives: Department of Labour 4003/1103/2 Report on the Federation of Non-European Trade Unions, Johannesburg 7th February, 1929). The report, however, would have been disputed by B. Weinbren, who was Ballinger's counterpart. "Whilst the I.C.U. is gradually fading away, the Federation grows stronger and more powerful every day. It is spreading its wings right through South Africa and its success is due to its militant and revolutionary policy." (The Labour Monthly 15th June, 1929). H.J. and R.E. Simons: Op.cit. records the foundation of the organisation in two places as if it were two different bodies, the South African Federation of Non-European Trade Unions (p.377) and the Non-European Federation of Trade Unions (p.400). According to this source La Guma (described as an African) left the Communist Party in 1929 (p.424) and his successor as General Secretary of the Federation, T.W. Thibedi (formerly of the I.C.U.), was expelled from the Party for "mismanaging trade union funds" (p.424).
 2. The Workers' Hall was partly paid for out of social functions, but normally a drain upon resources. At the National Council meeting of January, 1928, Kadalie reported that it "was just beginning to pay its way". (Minutes, F 1928/1).

ostentatious conferences and a newspaper that never paid. It was a rake's progress. The officials were frequently inept, sometimes barely literate in English, the language of administration, and mostly ignorant about the methods and objects of trade unionism. Disgraced officials were regularly taken back into senior positions - Simon Elias, Keable 'Mote, Alex Maduna, Thomas Mbeki and no doubt others. The whole administration was top-heavy, with far too many paid officials. At its peak there must have been a hundred branches. If each had a secretary paid six pounds a week, this alone meant an expenditure of £7,200 a year. Add to that the salaries of half a dozen Provincial Secretaries and of the Head Office officials, another £1,500 or £2,000. There is much truth in the assertion of L.H. Greene of Pietermaritzburg:-

"Overpaid - i.e. more than normal wages of the average worker - officials have done more damage to the I.C.U. than possibly any other factor except perhaps the prohibitive subscriptions as a contributive cause of the present apathy towards the movement." (1)

Its very improvidence would have killed the I.C.U. whatever else happened. The goose laid only one golden egg before its neck was wrung, and that was squandered in a profitless splurge. All too often the I.C.U. did not seem to know what to do, The inexperience of its leadership and the disparate and geographically dispersed character of its membership inhibited its welfare and negotiating functions, and consequently there was a tendency to be bemused by mere size of membership. Organisation - by which was meant expanding membership - seemed often to be an end in

1. L.H. Greene to W.G. Ballinger 1st March, 1929 (B/Wits).

itself. If Champion had a policy, it was recourse to the courts. In the short run it brought results, but in the long run it was easy enough to thwart by simple changes in the law, and it all ended with the Tatham judgment and the sale of I.C.U. property for the benefit of Cowley and Cowley. If Kadalie had a policy, it was appeal to the international labour movement, and the only outcome of that appeal was the support of a small group of English socialists whose enthusiastic and high-minded interest and concern were matched by an almost total impotence.

The achievements of the I.C.U. seem depressingly meagre: the Cape Town wage increase of 1920 (and it is doubtful how far that can be attributed to the Union); Champion's victories in the courts in 1926-1927; Kadalie's successful defiance of the Government's ban in 1926 and his appearance at Geneva in 1927; the Bloemfontein wage award (once again scarcely attributable to the I.C.U.); and the fall of Madeley in 1928 (a Pyrrhic victory, if one at all). Otherwise there was nothing but bloodshed, bickering and extravagance, all ending in bitterness, recrimination and disillusionment. It is difficult to forget the betrayal, not less poignant for being unintentional, of the wretched farm labourers in 1927-1928. Yet, perhaps, such an assessment would be unduly pessimistic. One cannot but marvel at the size and complexity of an organisation built up by half-educated men in a strange and hostile environment; at the high level of debate at the great conferences; and at the essential moderation and unanswerable justice of the demands that were made. It is arguable, moreover, that the achievement of the I.C.U. was the welding together - however transiently and partially - of the African and Coloured

workers into a single movement, something which the A.N.C. and the A.P.O. failed to do. It did something else novel, too. It penetrated for the first time beneath the crust of the articulate and educated class and initiated the first genuinely popular movement among Africans in South Africa. While it was the chief representative of African opinion, the I.C.U. explored what avenues were open to it, and if these turned out to be blind alleys, this does not mean that the exploring was not worth doing.

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